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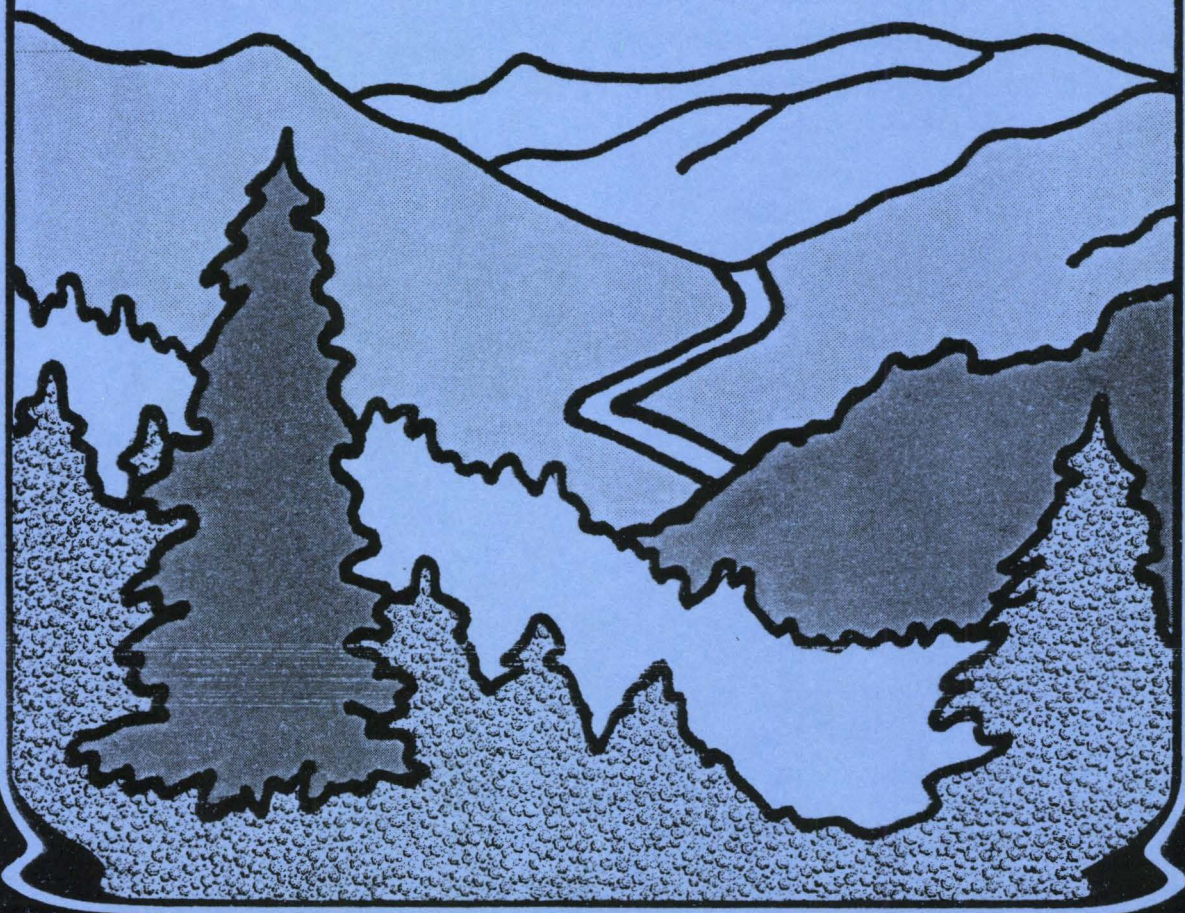
BLUE MOUNTAIN
NATIONAL FOREST SCENIC BYWAY

INTERPRETIVE MASTER PLAN
UMATILLA NATIONAL FOREST



A DEVELOPMENT AND INTERPRETIVE GUIDE FOR THE BLUE MOUNTAIN NATIONAL FOREST SCENIC BYWAY

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ABSTRACT

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A DEVELOPMENT AND INTERPRETIVE GUIDE FOR THE BLUE MOUNTAIN NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAY

The Blue Mountain Scenic Byway, designated in 1989, provides an alternate route for travelers along the Interstate 84 corridor in eastern Oregon. The Byway covers 130 miles through three rural counties and several, small communities. It offers a variety of scenery and other natural resources along with numerous historical sites and stories. This report provides the framework for interpretation of the rich historical and natural resources along the Byway. It includes recommendations for development of several interpretive media using a central theme.

Keywords: Interpretation, Scenic Byway

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A special thanks to the Morrow County Tourism Committee and all the other individuals and groups who have supported the concept of the Blue Mountain Scenic Byway. Your help and encouragement has kept this project alive.

A super special note of thanks to my family for being understanding while I worked on this project. They have sacrificed more than anyone. Now, the living room can finally be cleaned!

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Background

The National Forest Scenic Byway program was established in 1988 in response to the most popular form of outdoor recreation driving for pleasure (Magley, 1990). Dozens of scenic byways have been designated across the country.

The Blue Mountain Scenic Byway, designated on June 5, 1989 by Forest Service Chief F. Dale Robertson, provides an alternate route for travelers along the Interstate 84 corridor. The route leaves I-84 near Arlington, Oregon on the west and ties into the Elkhorn Scenic Drive on the east; the Elkhorn Scenic Drive leads back to I-84 near Baker City, Oregon.

The Blue Mountain Scenic Byway covers 130 miles through three rural counties encompassing several, small communities. It is the only such Byway east of the Cascade Mountains in the State of Oregon. Approximately half of the Byway is on lands within the Umatilla National Forest. The remaining half traverses land administered by Gilliam, Morrow, and Umatilla Countys.

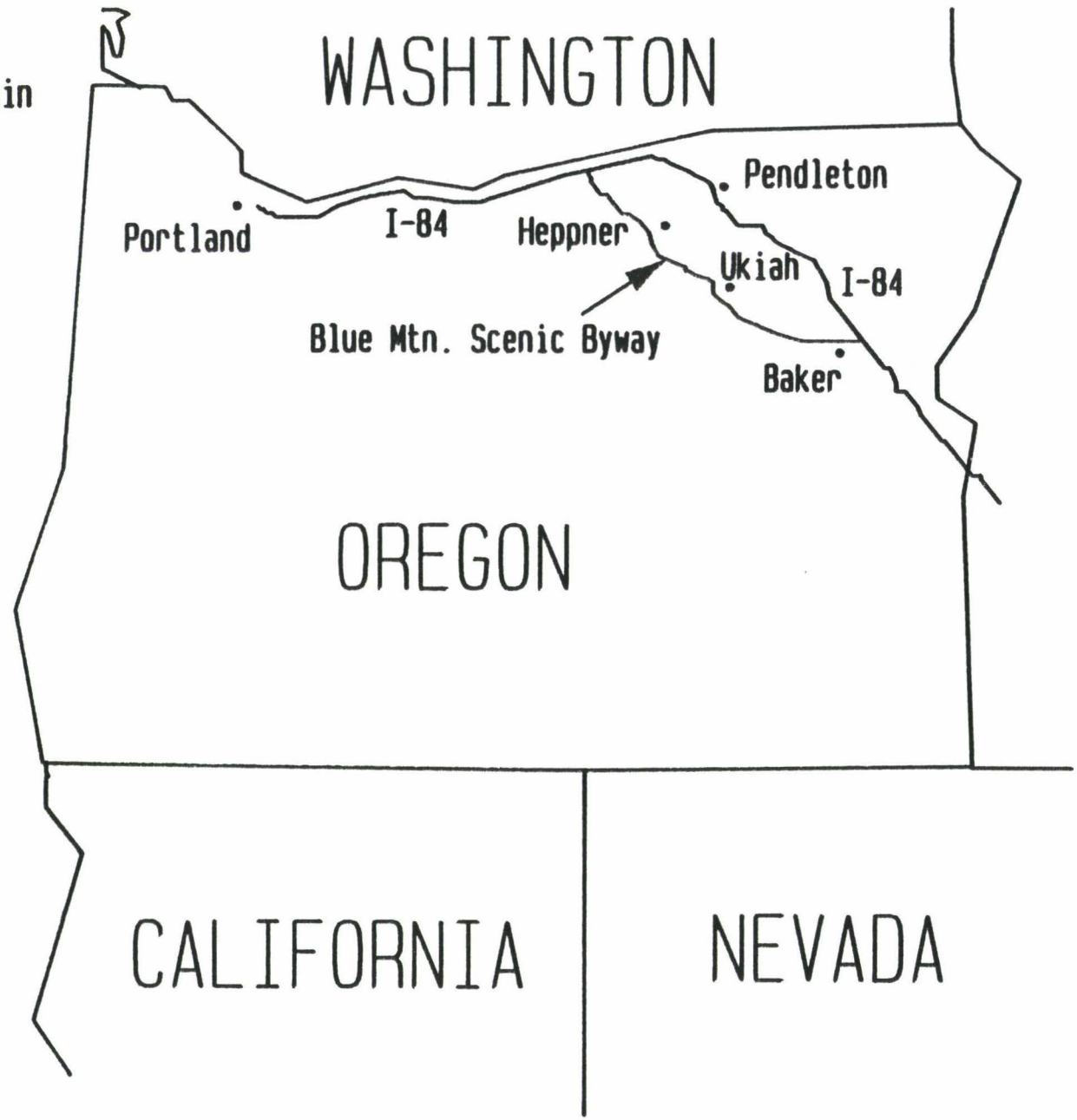
This Byway offers a variety of scenery along with historical sites and numerous recreational opportunities. Several sites are of national or state significance and include a National Historic District, a crossing of the Oregon Trail, the Wild and Scenic John Day River, and the North Fork John Day Wilderness. Also located along this route is a state-managed wildlife area and remnants of historic mining activities and settlements.

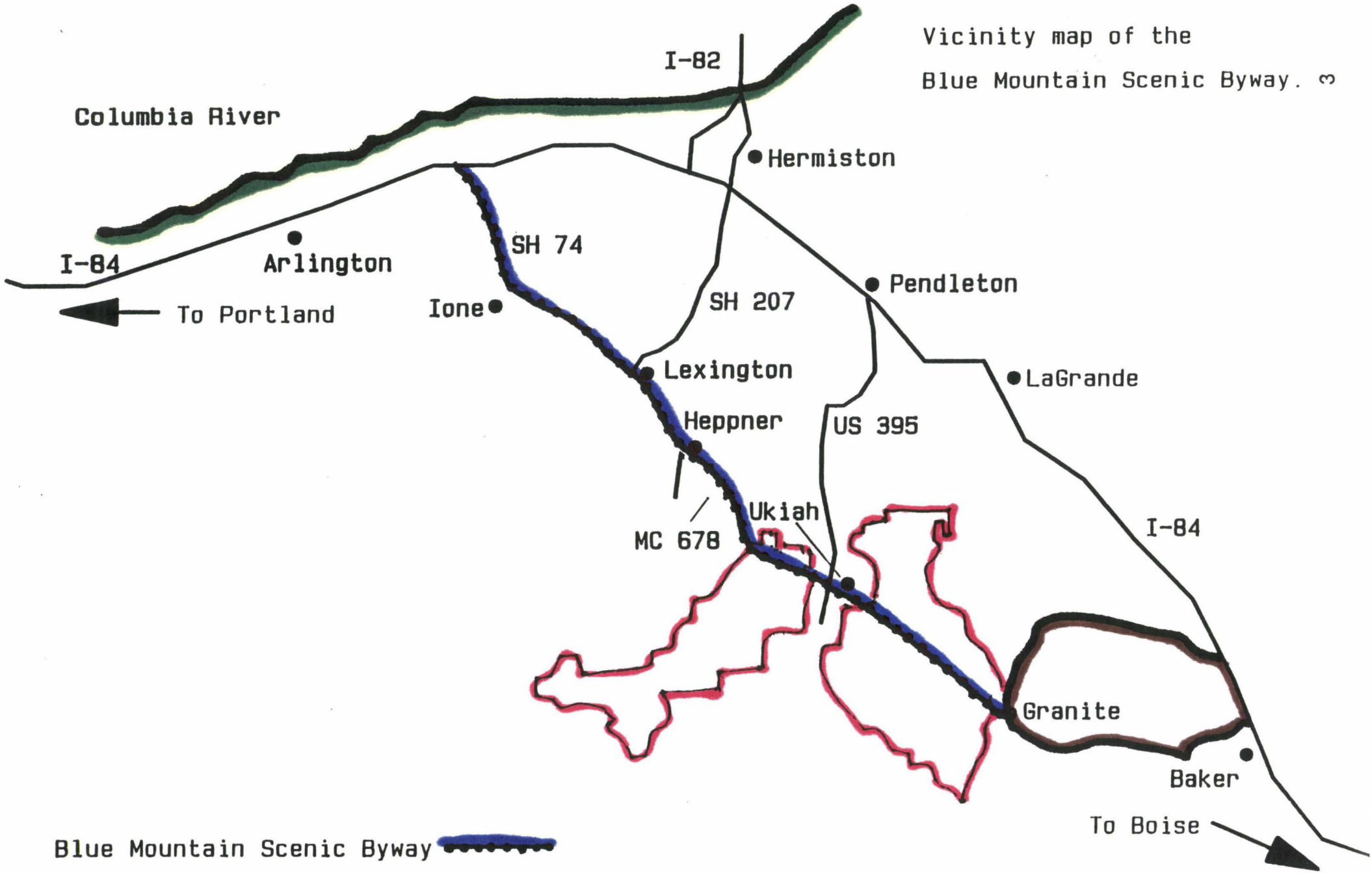
The designation of this Byway has potentially long lasting economic effects for local communities along the route. Tremendous support from county and city governments, chambers of commerce, tourism committees, legislative representatives, and the Oregon State Department of Transportation has been received. All are willing to participate in partnership opportunities to develop information and facilities associated with the Byway. In fact, the Blue Mountain Scenic Byway is an integral part of strategic economic plans developed by Morrow County and mentioned by several other groups as an aid to their economic growth. It is consistent with the Pacific Northwest Strategy, a regional effort of the Forest Service to form partnerships focused on helping resource-dependent communities prepare for and achieve their desired future. The Byway has been identified as a strength for the region in the recently completed Strengths, Weaknessnes, Opportunities, and Threats Analysis for Heppner, Oregon (OEDD, 1990).

The 1990 RPA Program contains four major emphasis areas "that will be vigorously pursued over the next 5 to 10 years." One of these emphasis areas includes enhancing the production of outdoor recreation opportunities. The development of the Blue Mountain Scenic Byway for use and enjoyment by the public will assist in this endeavor.

The Umatilla National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan has designated the National Forest lands along the Byway as a scenic corridor.

Location of Blue Mountain Scenic Byway.




Vicinity map of the
Blue Mountain Scenic Byway. 3
I-82
Columbia River
Hermiston
SH 74
I-84
Arlington
Pendleton
To Portland
Ione
SH 207
Lexington
LaGrande
Heppner
US 395
MC 678
Ukiah
I-84
Granite
Baker
To Boise
Blue Mountain Scenic Byway
Umatilla National Forest Boundary
Elkhorn Drive Scenic Byway

Statement of Purpose

The overall goal of this paper is to develop a useable and flexible interpretive plan for the Blue Mountain Scenic Byway.

Since the Byway was designated in 1989, interest in the area has increased. People have expressed an interest in traveling along the Byway, but want to know what they will encounter along the way. Presently, information is provided one-to-one with no particular resource identified.

The towns along the route have traditionally been resource based, commodity-oriented communities. With commodity resources becoming much more scarse, many of these towns are looking for tourism to assist in diversifying their economic bases. An interpretive plan will help in this effort.

A plan will provide a common thread to managers of the Byway. It will serve as a guide to the development of various sites along the route. Without a plan to organize and present information in a logical and consistent manner, travelers will be left to fend for themselves. With the publicity the Blue Mountain Scenic Byway is receiving in guide books and the placement of strategic signs, the lack of an interpretive plan could be devastating. People would be encouraged to travel the Byway without any information on the unique qualities of the area. In turn, this could create negative feelings which could cause unfavorable remarks and even cause future use to decline. In order to prevent this, the story of the area must be presented. Travelers need to know what they will find as they drive the Blue Mountain Scenic Byway.

Objectives

1. Identify and research interpretive opportunities.

2. Develop an overall theme for the Byway.

3. Develop an initial set of interpretive media.

4. Identify recreation opportunities and facilities to compliment the interpretive plan.

5. Encourage local communities to take advantage of economic opportunities.

6. Improve understanding of National Forest programs and activites.

7. Develop a plan that will act as a guide for future interpretive ideas and facilities along the Byway.

METHODOLOGY

METHODOLOGY

The literature review conducted for this project can be divided into two parts. The first consisted of a **technical** search on interpretive planning for scenic byways. Unfortunately, this yielded very little information. The search was expanded to interpretive planning in general. This identified several sources of information that have been very helpful. Several other sources were utilized as background material to assist in analyzing potential visitors as well as trends in outdoor recreation. The second part consisted of research into potential interpretive **subjects** found along the Blue Mountain Scenic Byway. Both were key to this report. The **technical** information provided the framework from which the **subject** information was used.

A review of Forest Service policy mandates an interpretive plan be completed for each scenic byway (November, 1990). A review was also conducted to ensure compatibility with the 1990 RPA Program and the Umatilla National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.

An inventory of potential **interpretive resources** was conducted. This included input from a variety of sources both inside and outside the Forest Service. This information was used to develop the overall **theme** for interpretation of the Byway.

A **visitor analysis** was conducted to determine **target audiences** for the interpretive plan.

In the conclusions section, the **target audience** and the **theme** were bridged by constructing a **delivery matrix**. It guides the actual development and implementation of the **interpretive plan**.

The **interpretive plan** provides direction to develop and transfer ideas contained in this report to "on-the-ground" action items. It provides recommendations for the initial interpretive effort. Many other interpretive opportunities have been identified and can be used at a later time to compliment the recommendations outlined in this section.

Finally, the **implementation and marketing** section describes efforts currently in progress regarding the Byway. It describes additional needs to assist in complete implementation of the interpretive plan.

DISCUSSION

THEME DEVELOPMENT

There are a number of areas along the Blue Mountain Scenic Byway which offer tremendous views of some very spectacular scenery. Views of very rugged, deep canyons and rivers will be highlighted along the route. However, much of the Byway possesses a beauty all its own, much of which does not include awe inspiring natural wonders. About 50 percent of the Byway traverses private lands, 25 percent of the Byway traverses National Forest lands having received noticeable management activity such as timber harvesting, and about 25 percent of the Byway travels through National Forest lands appearing in a near natural state.

The interpretive resource section has described a variety of resources available for interpretation. This variety can be classified into two major categories: historical and natural.

--The historical resources are self explanatory, describing the sequence of events leading to the settlement and development of the region.

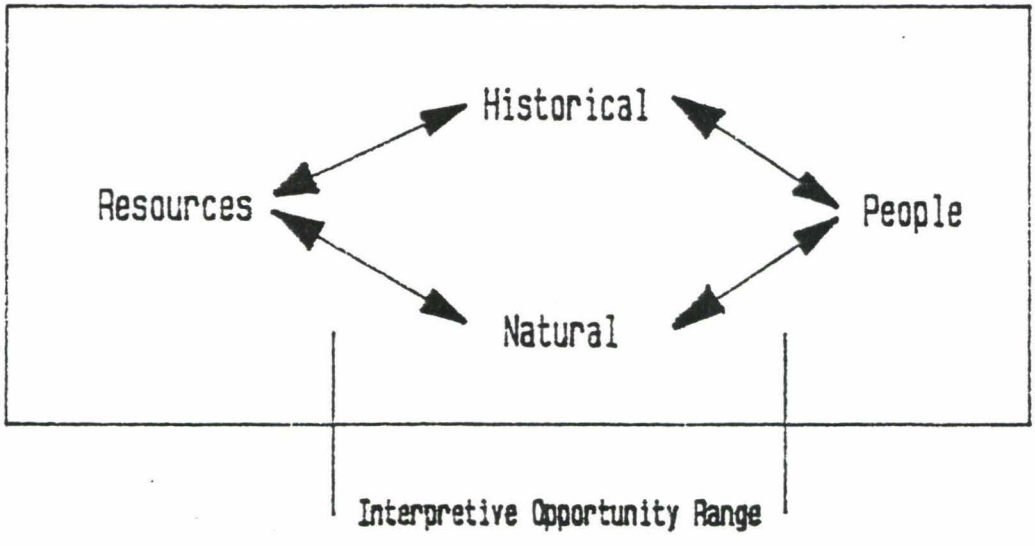
--The historical resources are further divided into two additional subcategories: events and places. Events, such as the 1903 flood in Heppner, and places, such as historical town sites will be highlighted.

--The natural resources serve as a foundation to describe natural processes at work and in some cases, man's ability, influence, and need to utilize and manage them.

The Blue Mountain Scenic Byway offers a different and little-known alternate route through the Blue Mountains of Northeastern Oregon. Along the way an abundance of resources are waiting to tell their story. The theme will be to tell the story of the natural and historical resources of the region to travelers of the route thereby "*linking people and resources through a natural and historical journey.*"

BLUE MOUNTAIN SCENIC BYWAY

Linking People and Resources
Through
A Natural and Historical Journey



INTERPRETIVE RESOURCES

NATURAL RESOURCES

Geology

The Scenic Byway geology from I-84 all the way up Willow Creek consists of many layers of lava flows. Lava flow thicknesses range from 10 to 100 feet. Individual flows issued quietly from fissures or cracks in the earth's surface and spread over tens of miles in a few hours. In the 10 million year period between 6 and 16 million years ago, sporadic outpourings of molten, highly fluid lava spread out over the landscape. In some cases, many thousands of years passed between lava flows. In other cases, successive flows occurred immediately.

What is seen now, as a result of six million years of erosion, are glimpses of lava flow outcroppings in roadcuts or steep banks carved by streams. Often, one, two. or more individual flow layers are visible. Sometimes. thin reddish colored layers are evident between successive lava flows. The thin beds are evidence of ancient soils that developed on the surface of the lower flow. It was later cooked and compressed when the next flow occurred. Iron oxides concentrated in the soil provide the reddish hues.

When lava cools, it sometimes forms columns that appear as hexagonal tiles if viewed from the top surface. From the side, flows often display a series of regular, parallel breaks in the rock that appear as a series of side-by-side columns. Geologists have determined that the columns form perpendicular to the direction of flow.

There are several locations along the road upstream of Willow Creek Dam that offer excellent opportunities to stop and look at the rocks closely.

At Cutsforth Park, the geology changes and lighter colored andesite flows are exposed. These rocks share an extrusive volcanic origin with the basalts but differ chemically. Nearby, but invisible from the road, large blocks of andesite lie in jumbled disarray with large trees growing out of cracks and between the large blocks. There are also small caves and tunnels formed by blocks lying next to and on top of each other.

Above Cutsforth Park the geology and topography change dramatically. From about the Umatilla National Forest boundary, the road and surrounding terrain steepens. Thin seams of coal can be found near Willow Creek, but the coal beds are too thin and sporadic to be of commercial value. Farther up the road, a variety of interbeded continental sedimentary rocks, including sandstone, siltstone, and shale are exposed in the streambed of a cascading waterfall.

From a short distance below to the summit of the Byway, basement rock of the Blue Mountains exist. The bedrock consists of altered sedimentary and igneous rocks about 150 to 200 million years old. Relative to the age of the earth, these rocks are very young. Rock types include argillite, chert, limestone, greenstone, and others.

At the junction of Forest Roads 53 and 21, intrusive igneous rocks underlie surface soils. Unfortunately for geologists and rockhounds, viewing of underlying bedrock is hampered by a two- to five-foot layer of soil. This soil, commonly referred to as "ash soil," resulted when Mt. Mazama (Crater Lake) erupted. Fortunately for foresters, the soil is highly suited to growing trees.

Wildlife

The vast, undeveloped areas along the Byway provides a diverse variety of wildlife species. More than 300 species of vertebrate animals are found in the Blue Mountains. The distribution, as well as abundance, of wildlife populations is largely determined by habitat type and conditions. Several special habitat components are very important including riparian areas, meadows, dead/down trees (snags), and old growth.

The forest supports one of the largest Rocky Mountain elk herds in the country. Other game species include mule deer, white-tailed deer, black bear, Rocky Mountain and California bighorn sheep, mountain lion, turkey, quail, grouse, and several species of waterfowl. Non-game wildlife include many species of furbearers, songbirds, predators, and reptiles. The Bald eagle occurs as a late fall and winter migrant along the North Fork John Day River. Large snags along the river are left as roost or perching sites for these scattered migrants.

Vegetation

The area adjoining the Columbia River and the Columbia Plateau are dominated by range land vegetation (grasses and shrubs) with forested types virtually nonexistent; some tree species can be found along streams or near springs. These areas are characterized by low precipitation levels with high summer temperatures.

The mountainous region is characterized by forest trees and shrubs; these types range from heavily forested areas of dense vegetation to more open, park-like settings of Ponderosa pine. Mountain meadows are interspersed throughout the forested areas providing a variety of vegetative types. Wildflowers are common in these mountain meadows particularly in the spring.

The great diversity of the region is reflected by the occurrence of 10 of the 116 forest and range ecosystems identified by Kuchler (1964) in the United States. The diverse vegetative types are directly related to landform, climate, elevation and historic management practices employed on the land.

Forest health is an emerging issue in the Blue Mountains of Oregon. Along much of the forested area between Heppner and Ukiah there is stark evidence of a severe Mountain Pine Beetle infestation. Most of the dead trees were removed by logging and the regeneration process is very visible as new lodgepole pine begins to dominate the sites. In addition, severe infestations of Western spruce budworm and Douglas-fir bark beetles have created large stands of dead and dying white fir and Douglas-fir. These epidemics have major impacts on wildlife habitats, recreation opportunities, timber growth, visual resources, fire hazards, and other resources of the area.

Water

The Byway travels through two major drainages of the Columbia River basin. Willow Creek lies along the western 70 miles of the route. It serves as a major source of irrigation for the Willow Creek valley.

The remainder of the Byway travels through many small drainages that drain into the North Fork John Day River. This river was designated a Wild and Scenic River in 1988. The North Fork John Day River's primary recreational uses are fishing, river camping, hiking, and sightseeing. The North Fork John Day River Trail lies on the north side of the river. The area is rich in early gold mining sites where both placer and dredge mining occurred. Water quality is excellent. Stream improvement projects have rehabilitated fish habitat. The river has the largest natural spawning population of anadromous fish in the Columbia River system above Bonneville Dam.

Fire

Fire has played an important role in the evolution of natural ecosystems and is essential to the perpetuation of many plant communities in the Blue Mountains of eastern Oregon (Hall, 1977). Fire scars indicate that fires of varying intensities occurred on an average of at least once every ten years prior to fire protection. High intensity conflagration fires caused plant communities dominated by highly competitive lodgepole pine and western larch to be favored over ponderosa pine, while low intensity surface fires maintained open, park-like stands of mature ponderosa pine and larch by removing competition from less fire-resistant trees and new growth. Legend has it that the frequency of fires in the area cast a "bluish" tint over the landscape; thus the name "Blue Mountains" was coined.

Since fire suppression programs began in the early 1900's, the exclusion of fire has changed the environment to one favorable to fire-sensitive white fir and other tree species. In a study of fire ecology in the Blue Mountains of eastern Oregon, it was noted that the change from ponderosa pine to white fir and Douglas-fir is gradually changing the Blue Mountain plant community from fire resistant to fire susceptible (Hall, 1977).

HISTORICAL RESOURCES

The 1804 Lewis and Clark expedition is considered the beginning of the historic period of eastern Oregon. The party came down the Columbia River reaching the eastern edge of Morrow County on October 19, 1805 (French, 1971). Their canoes were filled with dogs, because the men of the party did not want to be reduced to eating salmon.

Euro-American contact was limited from 1804 until the discovery of gold in the 1860's. Gold mining provided the impetus for the development of goods and services. Merchants, farmers, and stock raisers were attracted to the area. Gold mining reached its peak in the late 1890's. Several important lode mines were located in the Granite Mining District.

Immigration into the area was often by way of aboriginally established trails. The practice has produced an overlapping pattern of trails, wagon roads, and highways. Oregon became a territory in 1849 and settlers wanted clear title to lands traditionally held by Indians. Consequently, by 1855 Indian lands were ceded to the U.S. Government, and the Umatilla, Cayuse, and Walla Walla tribes were placed on the Umatilla Indian Reservation. Homesteading of public domain land steadily increased until the early 1900's.

In addition to mining and homesteading activities, the use of range land for both cattle and sheep grazing became increasingly important between 1860 and 1900. From 1900 to the present, timber harvest has continued as one of the primary economic activities. Associated with the history of the area is development of the railroad and new means of transportation and communication.

Historical Sites

**Oregon Trail*

The Oregon Trail shares a special place in the annals of history as it provided the main link for residents of the East wishing to move "out west!" Many enthusiastic pioneers began the long journey from Independence, Missouri, to the Oregon Territory via the Oregon Trail. It was a long and difficult journey lasting six months or longer. Many obstacles had to be overcome along the way; Indian attacks, disease, scarce supplies of food and water, floods, and breakdowns. Many lives were lost. The Oregon Trail passes through the Byway route about 15 miles from the Columbia River. From 1841 to 1850 the wagon trains wore deep ruts as the westward movement gained momentum.

Ruts along the Oregon Trail are visible today near Well Spring. Well Spring was very important to the pioneers, serving as a watering hole in an otherwise desert-like landscape.

Cecil

The town of Cecil was founded as a result of one migrant's misfortune along the Oregon Trail. William Y. Cecil had stopped to repair his wagon after leaving the Wells Spring area. His skill became very sought after as other members of the same wagon train began coming to him for repairs. The Cecil's decided to stay along the banks of Willow Creek where William Cecil built the first store and the government established a Post Office at Cecil in 1867.(Griffith, 1982).

Lexington

The town of Lexington can be traced to 1868 when William and Henry Penland drove a band of 1,000 sheep from Halsey, Oregon to where Lexington now stands. The town sprang up without any real encouragement from Penland. The site was sheltered by the rolling bunchgrass hills and was close to abundant water and wood. Penland's sheep operation grew to such vast scale that the "home place" was almost a small town in itself. With an ever increasing population in the bunchgrass hills around its periphery, Lexington was the natural trading center for most of the area. Moreover, wanting schools and churches for their children, a group of energetic, civic-minded citizens were dedicated to building a town. The day came in 1885 when the town was platted. Jane Penland was given the privilege of naming the town; she named it Lexington after her birthplace in Kentucky. William Penland, having introduced sheep into the area, built the first great fortune in this part of Oregon (McMillan, 1974).

Lexington grew more rapidly than any other town in eastern Oregon. It never was a raw, struggling frontier town; it was a solid community from the very beginning. The business directory contained nearly 30 establishments. Then in November 1887, three blocks of the business district were reduced to ashes when a devastating fire swept through the town. This fire had far reaching effects on the history of Morrow County. Lexington was never again to achieve the growth pattern it had started. Some businesses were rebuilt but many were not (McMillan, 1974).

Heppner

The town site of Heppner was founded when a squatter sold his claim to George Stansbury in 1870. The area was located "upstream" from William Penlands homestead (Lexington), and became known as Stansbury Flat. Stansbury had been postmaster at a small community on Butter Creek called Vinson, but in 1873 he was reappointed postmaster at a location known as Stansbury Flat. Before Stansbury moved his post office to its new location, an unidentified stockman persuaded Henry Heppner and Jackson Morrow to move to Stansbury Flat and build a store. The few stockmen settled in the area (journals list the number at about 25) had to haul their supplies from Umatilla Landing or Castle Rock along the Columbia River, a vast distance in those days. These stockmen wanted Heppner and Morrow to take over the job of bringing in supplies and distributing them (French, 1971). They decided to speculate on a store and in 1872, the store was opened for business. The settlement on Stansbury Flat grew rapidly, and before the year was out, it had been renamed for Henry Heppner, a suggestion, it is said, that came from Jackson Morrow. The town was platted in 1877.

Morrow County Courthouse

This historic building continues to stand guard over the town of Heppner. It was constructed in 1902 and is listed on the National Record of Historic Places. It was designed by E. Lazarus and measures 52.5 feet by 82 feet with four fireproof vaults. It was made of blue stone at a cost of $22,000. It remains one of the more impressive courthouses in Oregon (French, 1971).

Morrow County Museum

This museum houses a wealth of articles and photographs from the early days in the the area. Located in downtown Hepppner, the museum brings the rolling hills of the surrounding area to life. Five different rooms of early settler life have been carefully recreated for visitor enjoyment.

Ione

The eastern portion of the town site of Ione was originally settled by sheepman Ed Cluff in 1872. Another stockman, George Emerick owned the western portion of the town site. In 1883, Elisha Sperry acquired the Emerick land and thought it would be a good spot for a town site. Sperry named the town after a little girl living in the area with her parents, Ione Arthurs. The residents of Ione were content to live in a little country town with just enough merchants to provide the goods demanded by the Swedes who settled in the area. A post office was established in 1884 and a schoolhouse was built in 1885. It was incorporated in 1899 with Elisha Sperry serving as Ione's first mayor (French, 1971).

Morgan

The post office for the town of Morgan was originally located in the home of Ozwell Douglas two miles north of the present town site. The Kerr-Grifford grain company built a "sack house" grain warehouse at Morgan soon after the railroad was built up Willow Creek in 1888. Morgan became a shipping point for tremendous quantities of grain from both east and west of Willow Creek (Griffith, 1989).

Ukiah

This town was originally called Camas Prairie. The Indians came to the area for many years to gather wild blue camas root. The name of the town was changed to Ukiah by E.B. Gamba who lived in Ukiah, California before moving to Oregon. The town site, formed in 1891, boasted churches, mercantile stores, a telephone office, a creamery, bakery, blacksmith, livery stable, hotels, dance halls, and other establishments. Grazing, mining, and logging were the primary industries.

Smith Ditch

One trans-basin diversion ditch is present along the Byway. The Smith Ditch diverts water from Ditch Creek in the John Day Basin into Willow Creek for irrigation in the mid and lower Willow Creek Valley. It was constructed in the 1930's under the Civilian Conservation Corps program.

**Fremont Powerhouse*

The Fremont Powerhouse, located near Granite, Oregon, is a remnant of the mining era in the early part of the century. It was built to provide electrical power to nearby towns and gold mines in the area. Its history dates back to 1903. About this time, the earnings of some of the local mines, principally the Red Boy, began to decrease drastically. Efforts were made to find more efficient methods of operation. Until 1905, the Red Boy had been operated by steam power. In an effort to operate the mine more economically, the owners decided to utilize local water power to generate low cost electrical power. The powerhouse was completed in 1907, but power was not produced until 1908. Olive Lake, located eight miles away, provided water for the powerhouse. The water was delivered to the powerhouse through a wood and steel pipeline which dropped 1,068 feet in eight miles. The Fremont Powerhouse provided electricity to the area until it closed in 1967. In 1968, the California-Pacific Utilities Company donated the entire complex to the Forest Service. The powerhouse is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Historical Uses and Events

**Settling the Willow Creek Valley*

There is no historical evidence that Willow Creek Valley was settled any earlier than 1859 when John J. Jordan drove his wagon and stock south from the Oregon Trail crossing at Willow Creek (which became Cecil in 1863) to his future homesite near the confluence of Willow and Rhea Creeks. Jordan built a log cabin from cottonwood trees growing along the creek. He brought cattle from the Willamette Valley (in western Oregon), thus becoming the area's first cattleman. He also maintained a freight station on his place until the completion of the railroad in 1888.

**Heppner Flood*

In June, 1903, a devastating flash flood occurred. An intense storm passed through the area releasing a torrent of rain. When the runoff from Balm Fork and Willow Creek came together at the upper edge of Heppner, the wall of water was estimated to be about 20 feet high. Much of the city was destroyed, and 250 people lost their lives in one of the most tragic disasters in Oregon's history. It still ranks as the single event with the largest toll of human life in Oregon's history. The first roller compacted concrete dam in North America was constructed on Willow Creek in 1983 as a flood control device.

**Grazing*

In the late 19th century, sheep grazing left a dramatic mark on the landscape. Early Oregon emigrants were originally from the prairie states and had difficulty getting used to the tall trees on the west side of the Cascade Mountains. In the early 1860's, they drove their herds of cattle and sheep across the mountains in search of drier, more desirable range lands. They found the area of the Blue Mountains very desirable with an abundance of feed. For years sheep grazing provided the economic lifeline of Morrow County. "The Heppner hills often smelled like sheep; they were every place; almost half a million of them." (French, 1971).

St. Patrick's Day

Very early in its history, St. Patrick was recognized as Heppner's patron saint. The first Irishman to live in Morrow County was William Hughes, who arrived in the area in time to be included in the 1870 census. He went into the stock business and other occupations so he could help finance fellow countrymen interested in sheep grazing. Hughes wrote to Irish families to recruit young countrymen for the sheep camps in Morrow County. They were attracted to the sheep business. The greatest influx of Irish occurred around 1890 (French, 1971).

The Irish added an exuberance to life in Morrow County. They remembered St. Patrick through the years by flying the Irish flag and enjoying a community dinner. Today, St. Patrick is remembered each March with one of the largest celebrations in the State of Oregon. The town of Heppner goes "all out" for the St. Patrick's Day celebration as a reminder of the Irish history of the area!

Mining

Near the headwaters of Willow Creek, coal was discovered around 1879. Henry Villard, a prominent railroad promoter, came to Heppner to investigate the discovery. If sufficient coal was found, the railroad might come up Willow Creek into the mountains. In 1901, a number of prominent men in the Heppner area became interested in the venture and formed the Heppner Coal Mining Company. Sufficient coal was found and various pits were opened. Much excitement was created by this find. Work apparently progressed until the disastrous flood of 1903 in Heppner. Some of the backers lost their lives which may have caused the mine to close (Mitchell, 1982).

The Pendleton Railroad and Coal Company was the last company to be formed in the area. It wanted to construct a railroad to the mine, but it was becoming apparent that the coal discovered was not of high enough quantity or quality to make mining a profitable enterprise. The coal was not suitable for railroad steam engines. Needless to say, no major coal extraction took place; remnants of the exploratory work can still be seen in the area today.

Railroad - Link to the Outside World

The transcontinental railroads did not serve Oregon until the 1880's. The Oregon Railway and Navigation line along the Columbia River served the state's needs within its own confines, but there was no eastern connection with the Union Pacific until 1884. When the Oregon Short Line from Granger, Wyoming, to Hunnington, Oregon was completed. The Northern Pacific had reached Portland the year before, and Southern Pacific had made its Oregon and California connection by 1887 (McMillan, 1974).

With the transcontinental lines completed, the railroad companies began to show interest in developing branch feeder lines. Oregon Railway and Navigation considered the northern Oregon area between Pendleton and The Dalles as its domain. However, the geography of the region made access difficult, because most of the communities of eastern Oregon were separated by several deep canyons. Individual branch lines were built to reach them rather than one main line.

> "The O.R.& N. did not think any of them would provide immediate heavy traffic, so they bided their time. It was not until the people of Morrow County subscribed funds for the purchase of a right of way south from the Columbia up Willow Creek, that the O.R.& N. made ready to build a branch line." (Mcmillan, 1974)

The following article appeared in the Lexington "Weekly Budget" of October 25, 1888:

> "The track of the Willow Creek branch railroad has reached Lexington. The whistle of the construction engine echoing along the canyon now announces that we are connected with the rest of the United States by a double band of steel. We don't feel so lonely now, nor so far away, and the time is near when the bunchgrass farmer can step on the cars here and go to Portland to reduce his surplus without the tedious stage ride of thirty seven miles."

The completed railroad line strengthened the economy of the area by allowing more people to homestead and providing easier access to the market (McMillan, 1974). The railroad was eventually extended to Heppner where the branch line is still used today.

**Lumbering*

The history of logging in the Morrow and Umatilla County region can be traced back to the the first timber survey notes of Alonzo Gegnon in 1874. C.K. Peck's 1942 thesis presented to the School of Forestry, Oregon State College states in part:

> "The first cuts on the forests were made in the "fifties and sixties" when packers, freighting in supplies to the mines in Grant County and in Idaho, built settlements at the various places along the route."

> "Only the best of logs could be used from which to saw lumber. Each tree was necessarily felled on favorable ground so that the men could dig a trench below the logs in which to stand and pull the whip saw. Logs were often placed on skids and moved into positions over the pits so that the laborious work was made easier."

**Lumbering* (cont.)

Several mills were located in the region as early as the 1870's. S.P. Garrigues built the first mill in the Willow Creek Valley in 1878. The mill was operated for several years with a ready market for lumber in nearby communities, including Heppner fifteen miles north. Logging was done by teams of oxen that skidded logs downhill in dirt chutes.

Today, Kinzua Corporation operates a mill near Heppner. Situated along the Byway, this is one of the most modern, computerized sawmills in the country. Kinzua also generates electricity in a co-generation plant; this plant uses sawmill waste materials that were not utilized historically.

VISITOR ANALYSIS

An effective interpretive plan must include an analysis of who will be using the facility and why (Coutant). This information serves as a basis for identifying the kinds of services to provide in order to enhance the experience of the user(s). Targeting the audience also makes it possible to link the theme to audience needs.

Driving for pleasure (sightseeing) is projected to increase in demand by 12.2 percent per year in the State of Oregon (SCORP, 1988). The Blue Mountain Scenic Byway travels through a relatively remote section of northeastern Oregon. Motel facilities are limited in number at the present time. A few Bed and Breakfast establishments are located in the Heppner - Ione area. For this reason, people using the Byway will likely need to be self-contained if they plan to stay overnight along the route. A number of overnight camping facilities are available with several planned campgrounds also in the works.

A number of requests for information about the Byway have been received and a number of personal contacts have been made. These people are from all around the country.

Retirees will be one of the primary audiences of this interpretive plan for several reasons. First, they represent one major segment of our population having the capability to travel in a self-contained mode. Second, most of the requests for information on the Byway have been from people looking for different routes between points of travel with time not being particularly important, i.e., retirees. Finally, the theme of the Byway focuses on natural and historical resources, and retirees are generally looking for information and experiences centering around these features (Bultena, et al., 1984).

Another audience group includes people living in the Northwest, particularly those living within three hours of the west entrance to the Byway. This includes the area around Portland, Oregon. The population of Oregon increased 24 percent between 1970 and 1980. Future projections call for the population growth to be about 1.2 percent a year. Most of this growth is in urban areas. Oregonians spend a significant amount of leisure time and disposable income on recreation activities within the state (SCORP, 1978). Since the major population centers are in larger cities, one important component of their lives is the ability to "escape from an urbanized lifestyle" (Eastern U.P., 1981). The Byway offers such a retreat opportunity.

As with the retiree audience, urban visitors need to come equipped to spend time in one of the developed campgrounds, or dispersed sites. Car camping is one of the high-growth activities identified in the State. The Byway lends itself nicely to this activity.

BLUE MOUNTAIN SCENIC BYWAY - DELIVERY MATRIX

Linking People and Resources through a Natural and Historical Journey

Goal #1: Provide the visitor with information regarding the history and natural resources of the Blue Mountain Scenic Byway.

Sub-Theme	***Message***	***Experience***	***Medium***
Early Travelers	The initial exploration of the area. - Oregon Trail - Lewis and Clark - Grazing - Railroad - Etc.	Create a sense of appreciation for the hardships faced by early travelers.	Wayside Exhibit: - The Oregon Trail - Brochures and Audio Tape - Self Guided Brochure - General
Early Developments	Settlement of Willow Creek Valley and Camas Valley	Create an awareness of early life in the region	Morrow County Museum Morrow County Courthouse Wayside Exhibit: - The Oregon Trail - Camas Valley Brochures and Audio Tape: - General - Self Guided Annual St. Patrick's Day Celebration
Nature's Processes	The diversity of the Blue Mountains of Oregon.	Create an appreciation for the land and its resources	Wayside Exhibit: - Camas Valley - Potamus Point - Blue Mountains - Heppner Flood Interpretive Trail: - Cutsforth Park Brochures and Audio Tape: - General - Self Guided - Nature Trail

BLUE MOUNTAIN SCENIC BYWAY - DELIVERY MATRIX

Linking People and Resources through a Natural and Historical Journey

Goal #2: Provide visitors with a variety of recreation opportunities along the Blue Mountain Scenic Byway. Utilize these opportunities to help with interpretation of the route.

Recreation Activity	***ROS Setting***	***Facility Needs 1/***	***Potential Interpretive Ideas***
Driving for Pleasure	Roaded Natural Roaded Modified	Roads	Refer to the Interpretive Plan
Car Camping	Rural	RV Park - Willow Creek Res (Potential)	Heppner Flood
	Roaded Natural	Cutsforth Park (Existing)	Nature Trail
	Roaded Modified	Kelly Prairie (Potential)	Meadow Ecology, Grazing
	Roaded Modified	Penland Lake (Existing)	Fish, Water
	Roaded Modified	Big Creek (Existing)	Fish, Insects
	Roaded Modified	North Fork John Day (Existing)	Timber Harvesting
	Roaded Natural	Potamus Point (Potential)	Geology
Hiking	Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized	Bald Mountain Complex (Existing and Potential)	Nature Trail, History
	Rural	Willow Creek Reservoir (Potential)	Wetlands

1/ Facilities should be consistent with ROS Setting

BLUE MOUNTAIN SCENIC BYWAY - DELIVERY MATRIX

Linking People and Resources through a Natural and Historical Journey

Goal #1: Provide the visitor with information regarding the history and natural resources of the Blue Mountain Scenic Byway.

Sub-Theme	***Message***	***Experience***	***Medium***
Early Resource Use	The use of natural resources in the early days	Create an understanding of the way people made livings during the settlement of the area.	Interpretive Trail: - Cutsforth Park Morrow County Museum Fremont Powerhouse Brochures and Audio Tape: - Nature Trail - General - Self Guided
Land & Resources Today	Man's interaction with nature through forest management	Create an awareness and understanding of forest management practives in use today and how past practices have influenced them.	Wayside Exhibits: - Blue Mountains - Rocky Mountain Elk Information Centers Brochure and Audio Tape: - Self Guided

ACTIONS

INTERPRETIVE PLAN

Visitors traveling on the Blue Mountain Scenic Byway will need to be directed along the route to enjoy its offerings. They will also need to know where they are along the route and what conveniences to expect. To facilitate this need, actual components of the interpretive plan are broken down into the following categories:

Roadside Exhibits
Brochures and Audio Tapes
Support Facilities
Entrances
Information Centers and Other Signs

Roadside Exhibits

Roadside exhibits are a very important interpretive tool because they are always on the job (Jones, 1990). These exhibits play a key role by highlighting some of the resources found along the Byway. These exhibits should be planned and designed as a group to promote continuity and consistency. It also helps give the interpretive facilities a recognizable appearance. Because several roadside exhibits occur on non-National Forest lands, coordination and the development of implementation partnerships will help maintain a consistent appearance. Coordinating schemes of identification will reduce visitor confusion. Design criteria of exhibits will be completed prior to implementation. The following pages include conceptual frameworks for the installation of the roadside exhibits.

Title: Oregon Trail

**Placement*

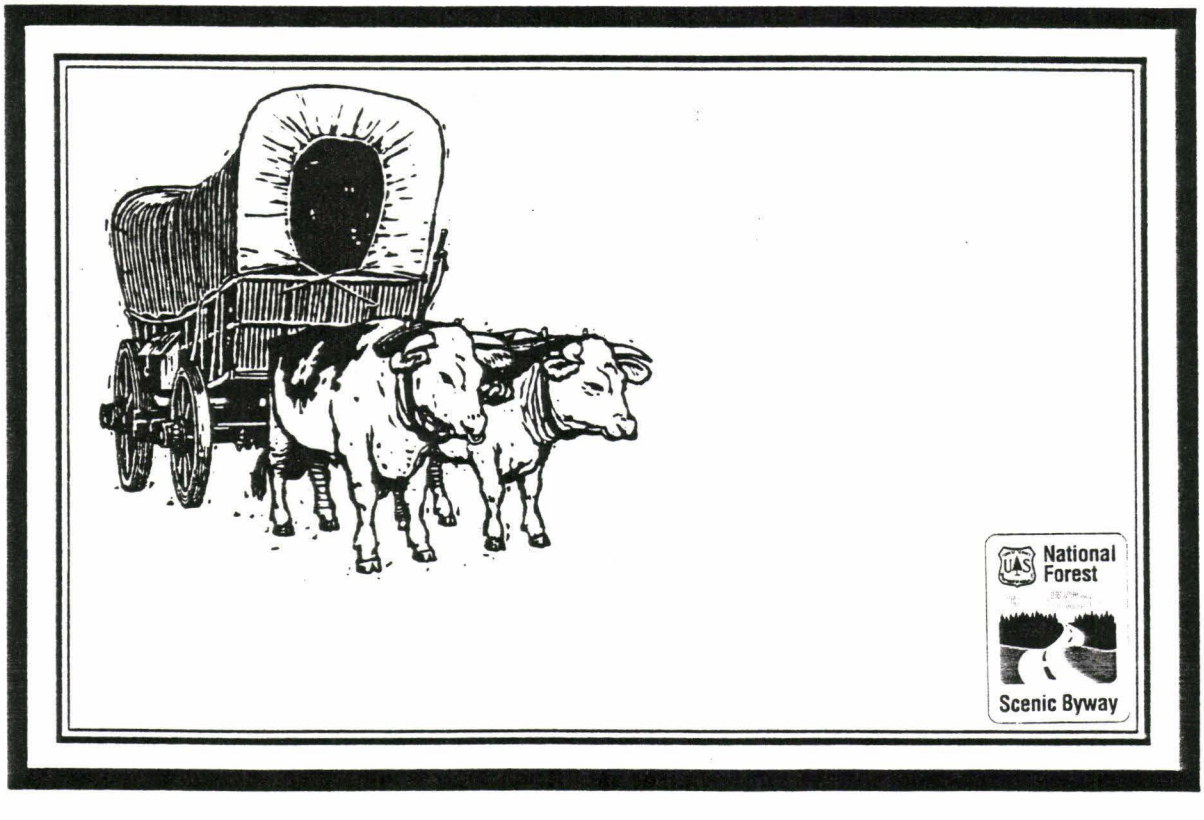
Town site of Cecil. This site will have 2 interpretive signs.

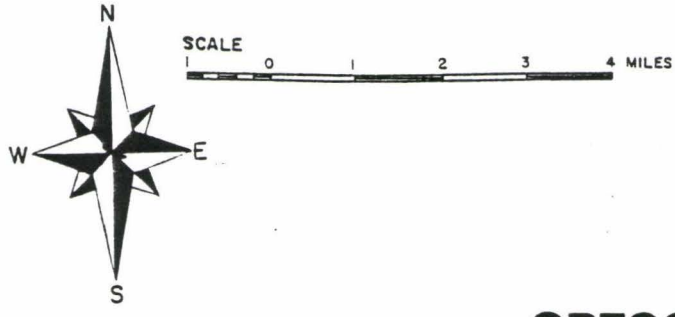
**Purpose*

To inform visitors of the difficulty early pioneers had crossing the nation by covered wagon. It will also direct visitors to the Oregon Trail Society site at Well's Spring 14 miles to the east.

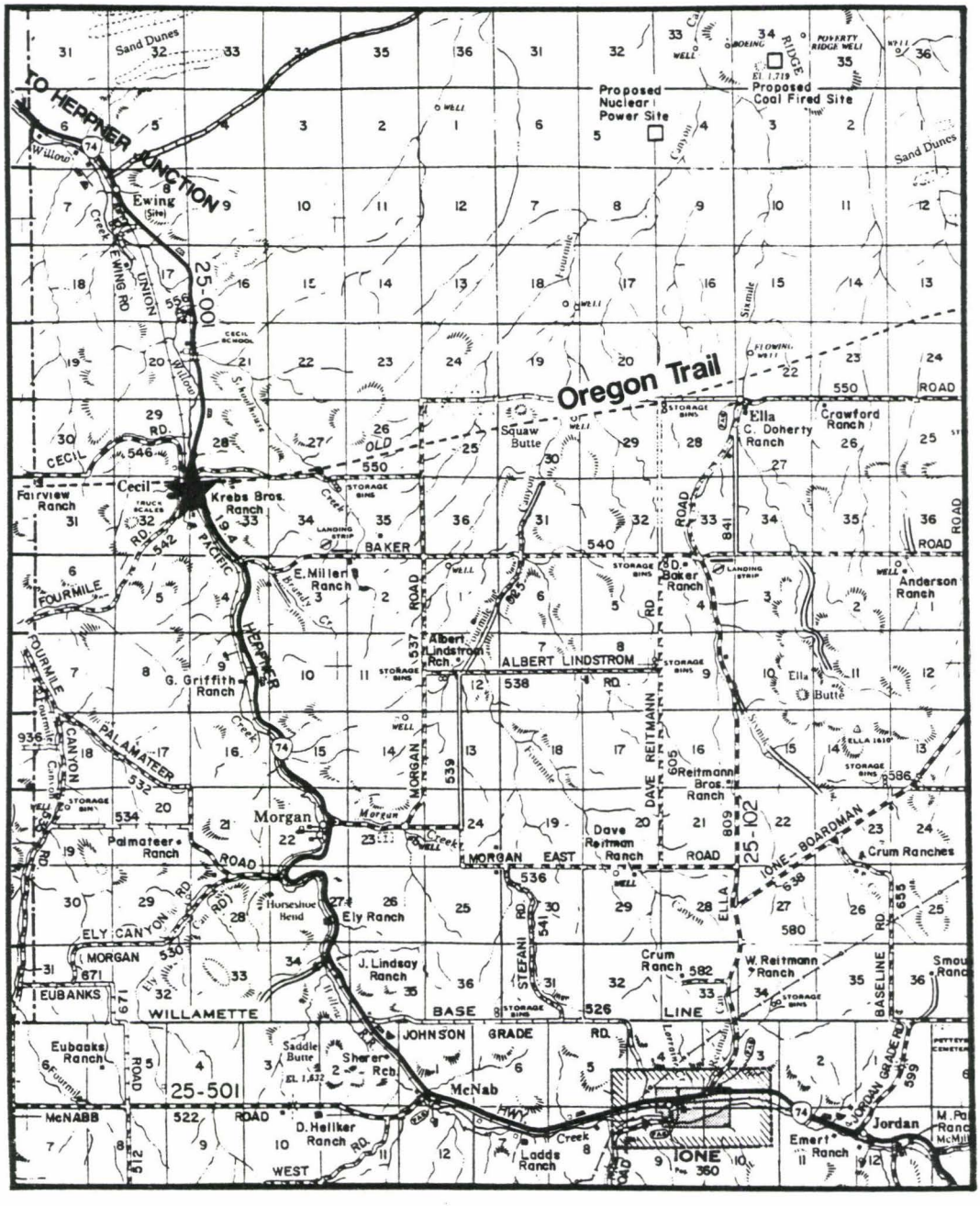
**Inscription*

The Oregon Trail was the main route to the Oregon Territory. Departing from Independence, Missouri, pioneers began a long and hazardous journey. Those completing the six-month journey overcame Indian attacks, disease, floods, equipment breakdowns, and scarcity of food and water. Others lost their lives.





OREGON TRAIL



Title: Town of Cecil

**Placement*

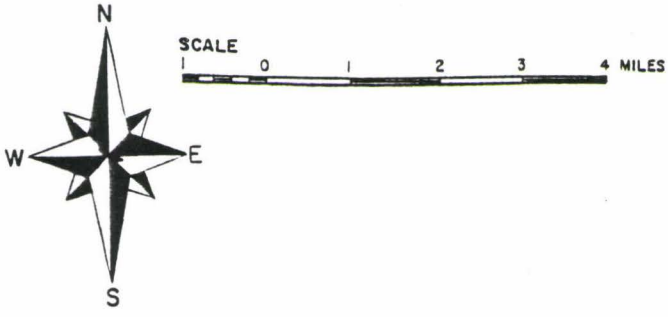
Town site of Cecil

**Purpose*

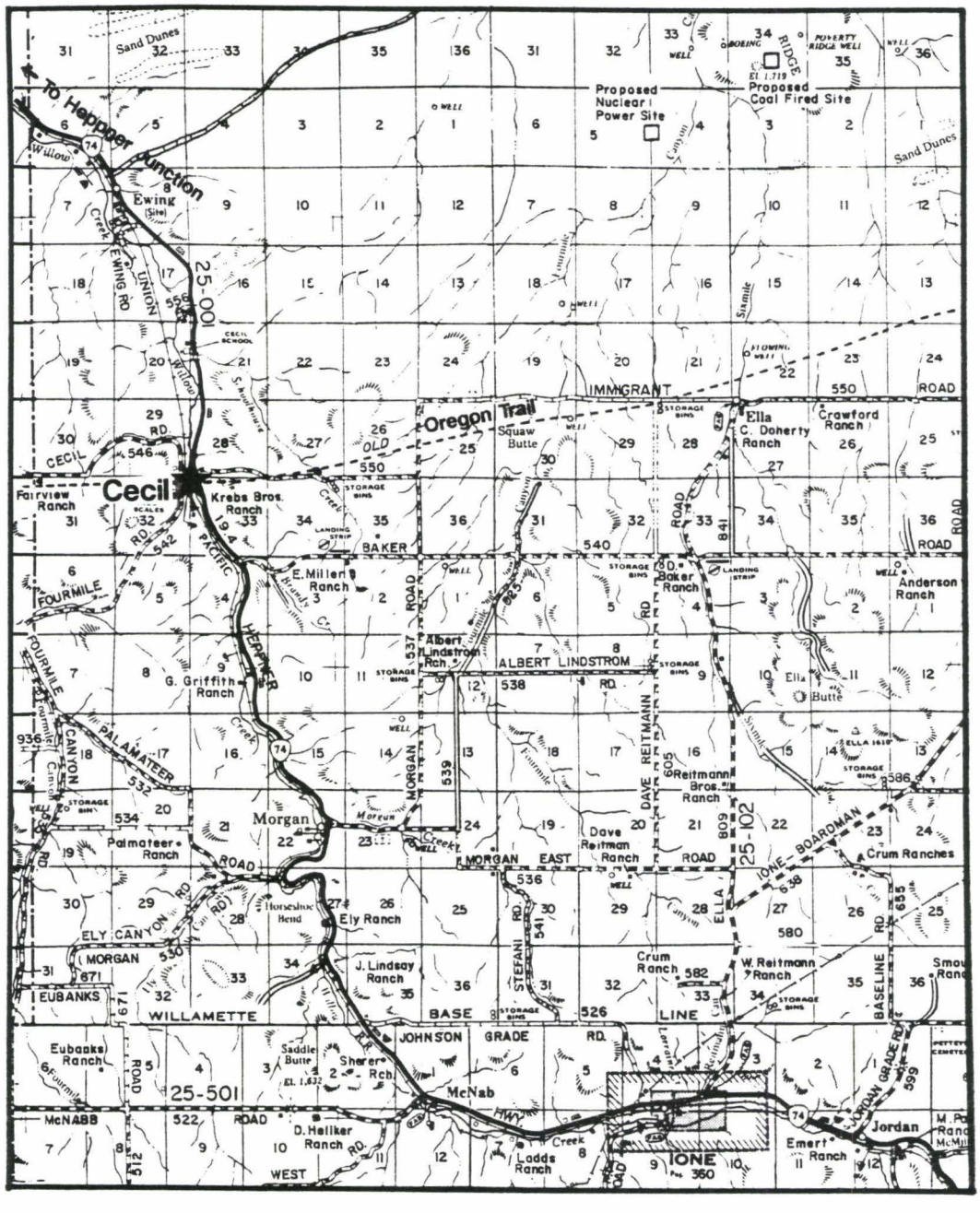
To inform visitors of the difficulty early pioneers had crossing the nation by covered wagon. It will also direct visitors to the Oregon Trail Society site at Well's Spring 14 miles to the east.

**Inscription*

The town of Cecil was founded on one traveler's misfortune. Stopping along the banks of Willow Creek to repair his wagon, William Cecil began helping others with similar problems. The family decided to stay and build a store. A post office was established in 1867.



TOWN OF CECIL



Title: Heppner Flood

**Placement*

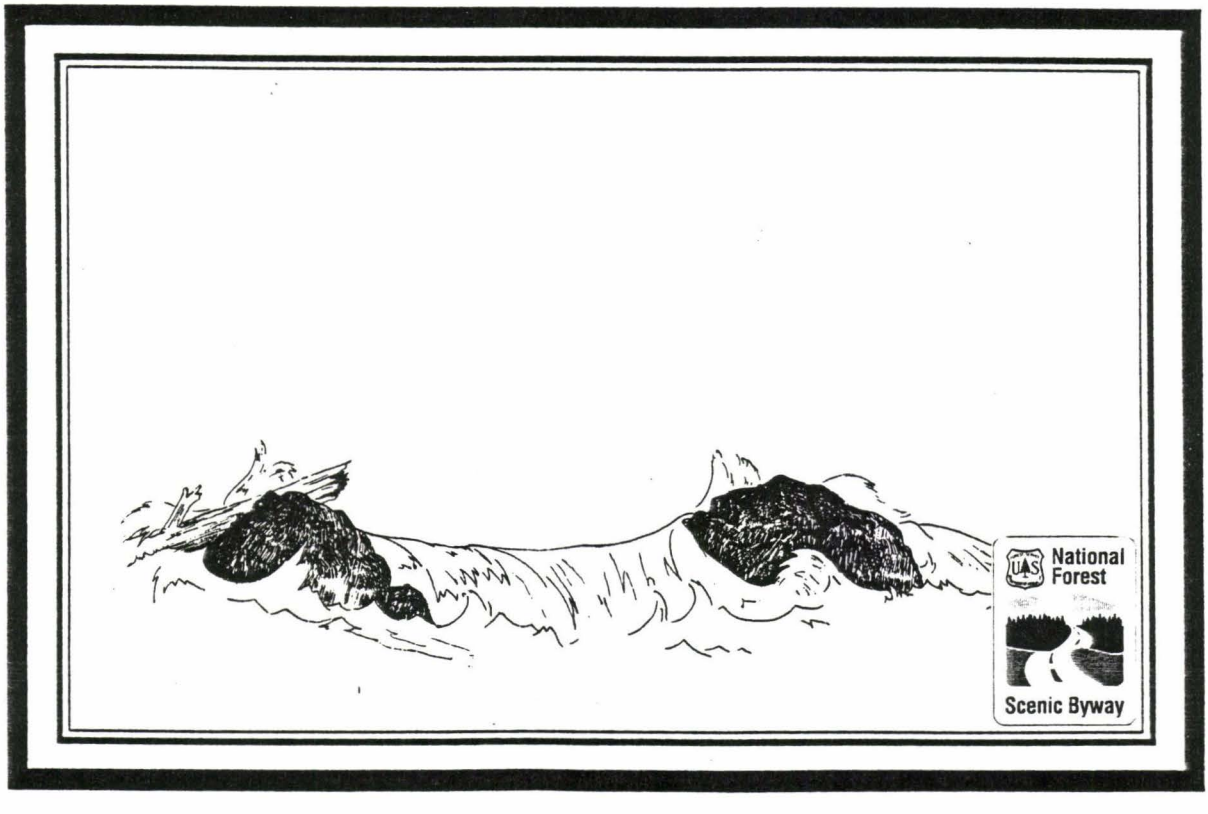
Corps of Engineers' Recreation Site overlooking Willow Creek Reservoir. This site will have 2 interpretive signs.

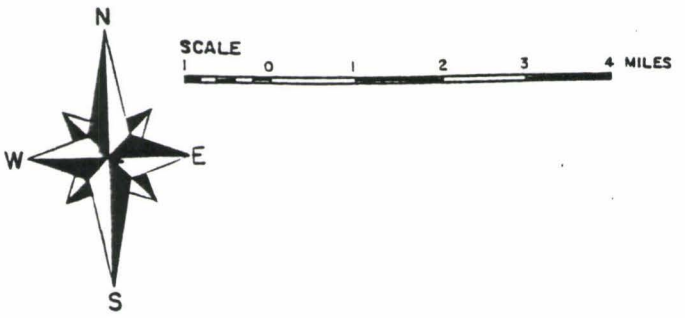
**Purpose*

To create a sense of appreciation for the power and destructive potential of natural events.

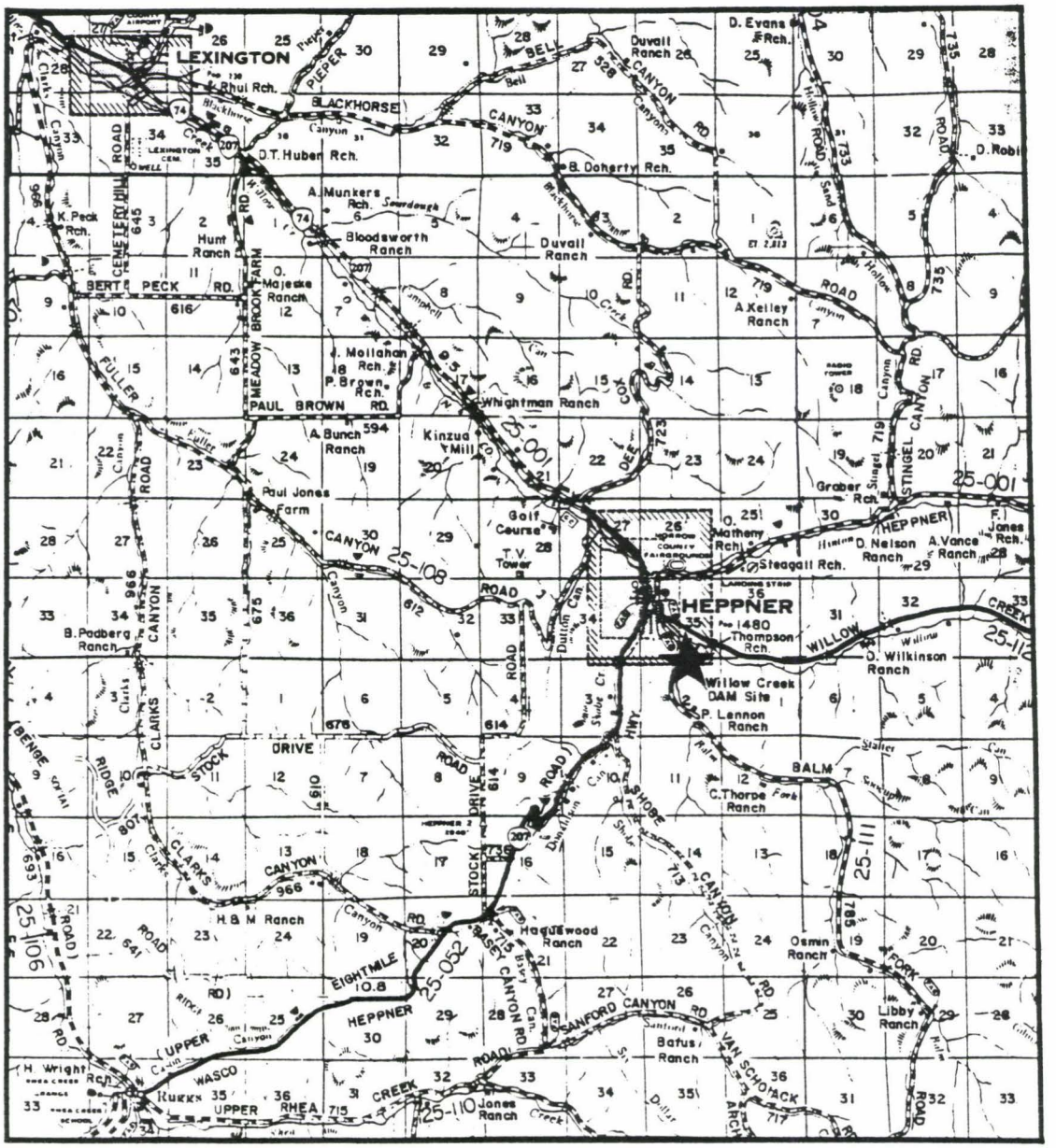
**Inscription*

On June 14, 1903, an intense storm released a torrent of rain. The rain could not be absorbed into the ground, and the resulting wall of water was nearly 20 feet high. This wall of water destroyed much of Heppner and killed about 250 people. This flash flood took more lives than any other single event in Oregon history.





HEPPNER FLOOD



Title: Willow Creek Dam

**Placement*

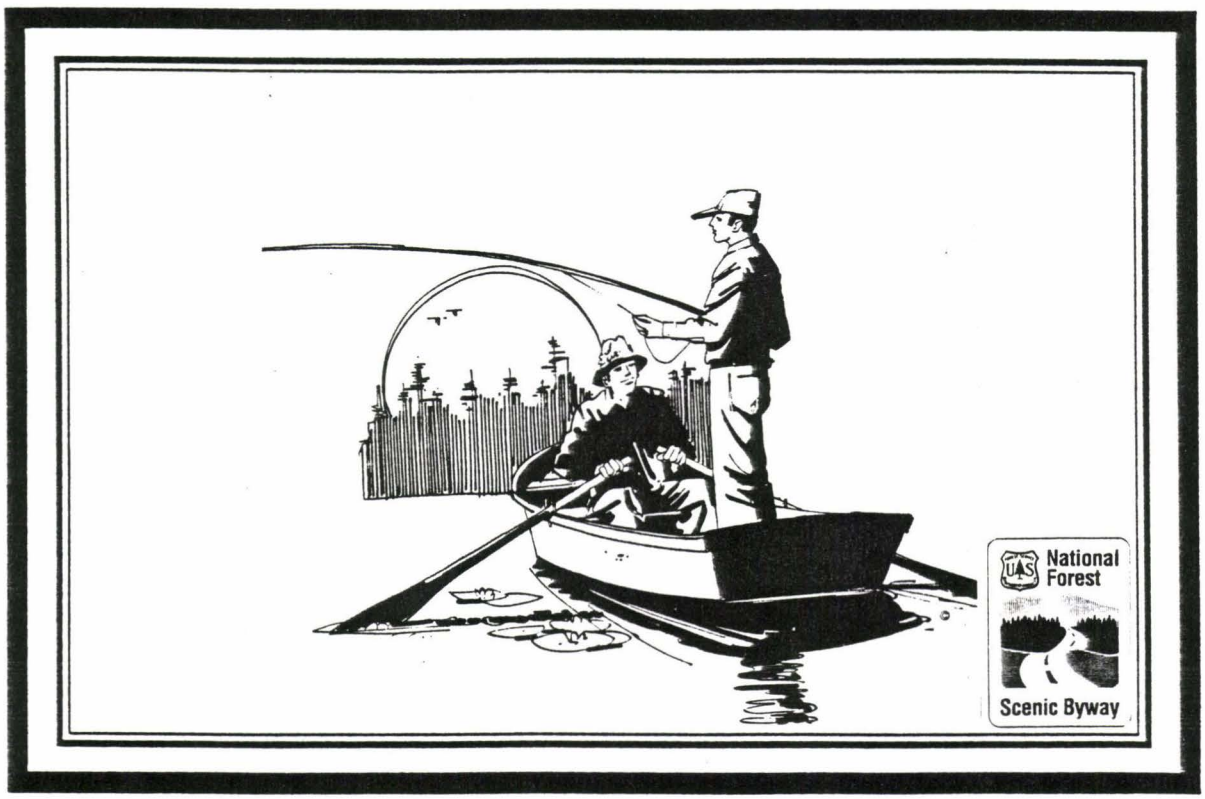
Corps of Engineers' Recreation Site overlooking Willow Creek Reservoir

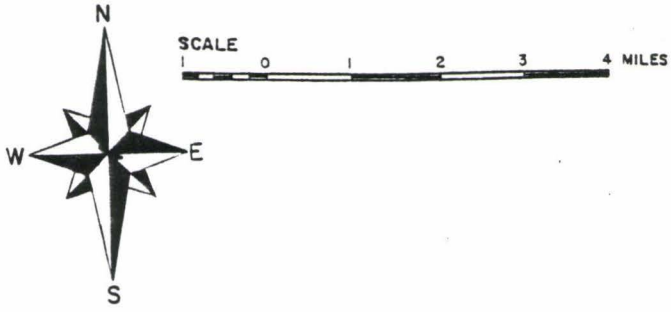
**Purpose*

To create a sense of appreciation for how man deals with the power and destructive potential of natural events.

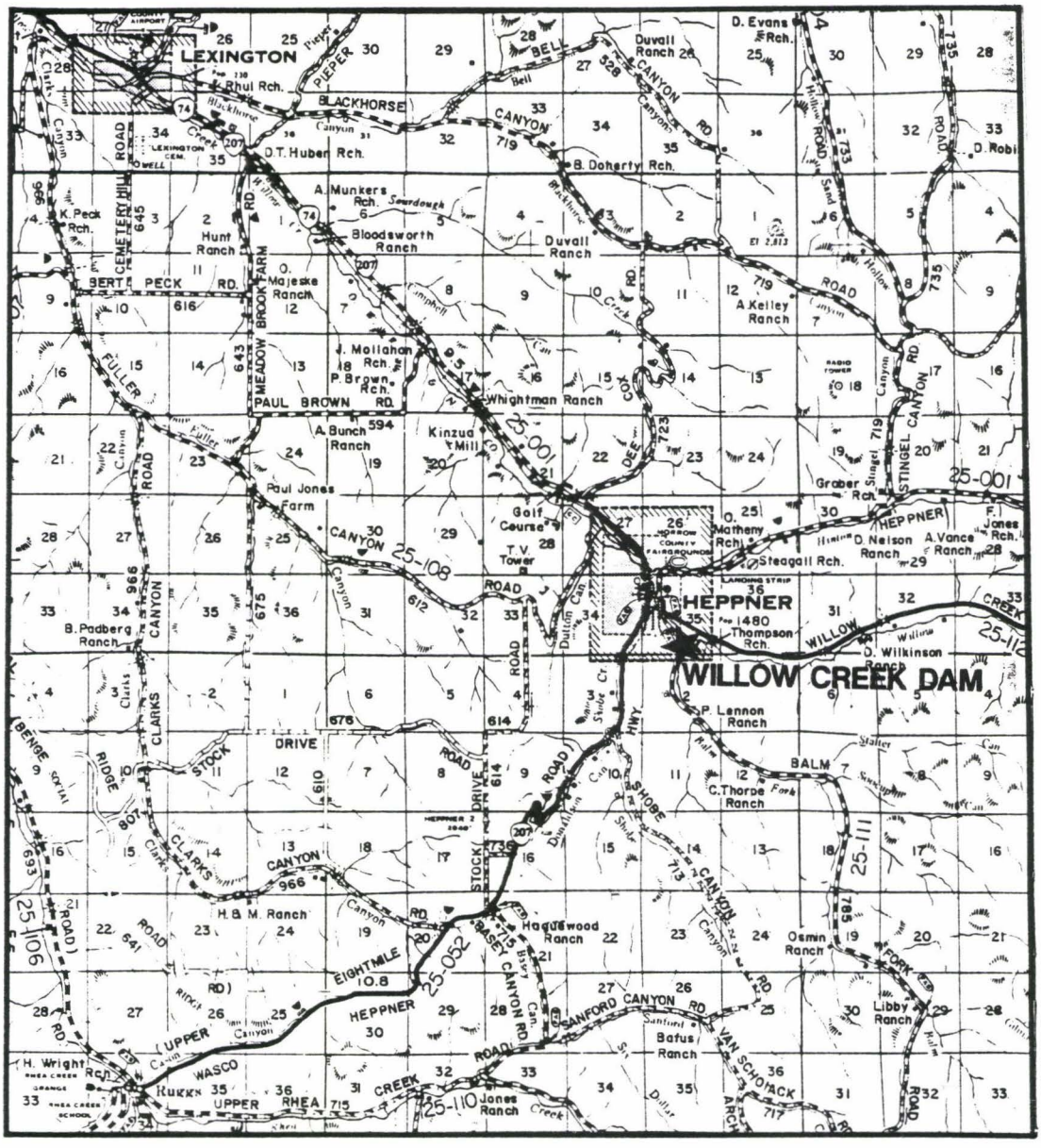
**Inscription*

The first roller compacted concrete dam built in North America stands below you. It was constructed by using concrete "rolled" into place in one foot layers rather than by pouring concrete into forms (a more traditional construction technique).





WILLOW CREEK DAM


WILLOW CREEK DAM
LEXINGTON
HEPPNER
BLACKHORSE CANYON
EIGHTMILE CREEK
UPPER RHEA CREEK
PAUL BROWN RD.
BERT PECK RD.
MEADOW BROOK FARM
CLARKS CANYON ROAD
FULLER CANYON ROAD
STOCKADE RIDGE ROAD
CLARKS CANYON ROAD
HEPPNER HIGHWAY
WILLOW CREEK
STINGEL CANYON RD
SANFORD CANYON RD
VAN SCHOIACK ROAD
BALM FORK ROAD
PIPER ROAD
BELL CANYON RD
HILLOW ROAD
SAND HOLLOW ROAD
COX CANYON
DUTTON CANYON
BASEY CANYON RD
WASCO
25-001
25-108
25-106
25-052
25-110
25-111
25-112
Golf Course
T.V. Tower
Kinzua Mill
Whightman Ranch
Paul Jones Farm
Bloodsworth Ranch
Duvall Ranch
A. Munkers Rch.
D.T. Huber Rch.
B. Doherty Rch.
D. Evans Rch.
K. Peck Rch.
Hunt Ranch
O. Majeske Ranch
J. Mollahan Rch.
P. Brown Rch.
A. Bunch Ranch
A. Kelley Ranch
Grober Rch.
O. Matheny Rch.
Steagall Rch.
D. Nelson Ranch
A. Vance Ranch
F. Jones Rch.
B. Padberg Ranch
Thompson Rch.
D. Wilkinson Ranch
P. Lennon Ranch
C. Thorpe Ranch
H.B.M. Ranch
Haguewood Ranch
Osmin Ranch
Libby Ranch
Batus Ranch
H. Wright Rch.
Jones Ranch
Rhea Creek Grange
Rhea Creek School
Airport
Cemetery Hill
Lexington Cem.
Heppner 2 Road
Morrow County Fairgrounds
Landing Strip
Radio Tower
Dutton Can.
Slobe Cr.
Sand Hollow Cr.
Blackhorse Creek
Willow Creek
Rhea Creek
Jones Creek
Basey Can.
Sanford Canyon
Fork Canyon
Hillow Canyon
Sand Hollow
Stingel Canyon
Cox Canyon
Dutton Can.
Slobe Can.

Title: Potamus Point

**Placement*

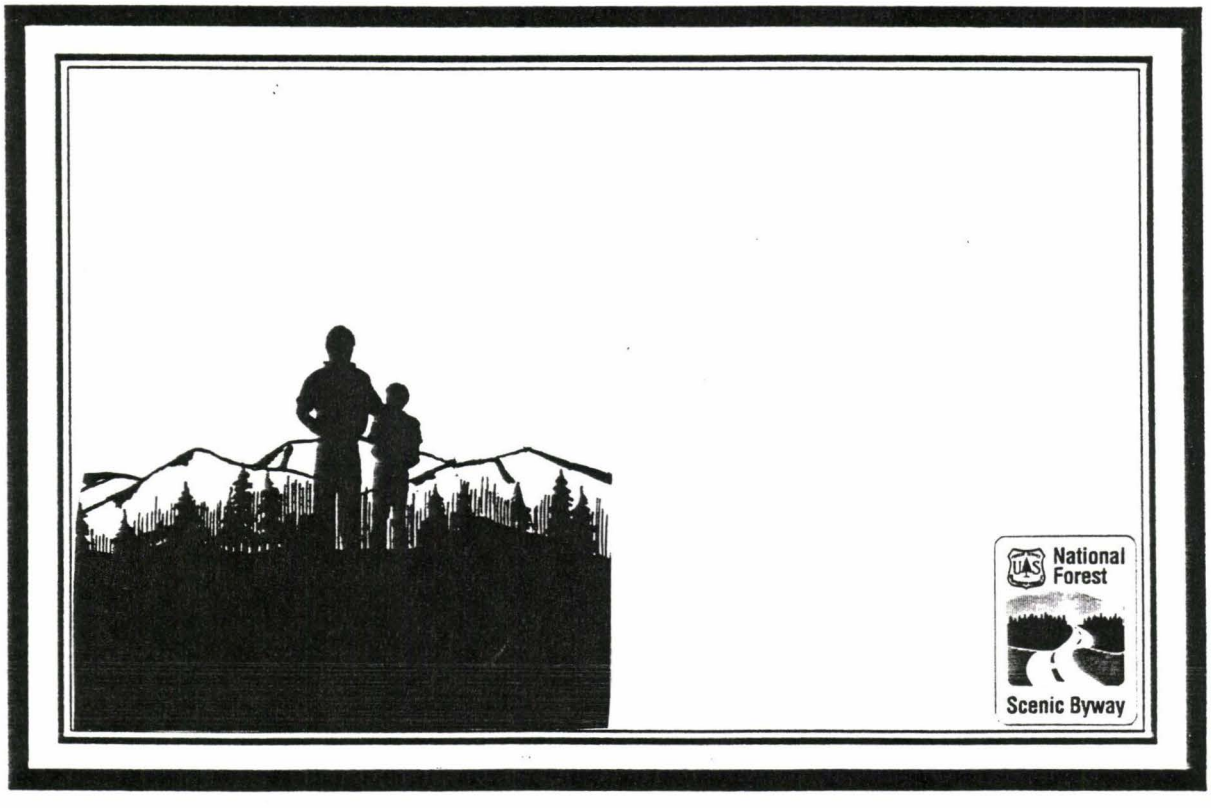
Forest Service Road 5316 approximately 15 miles south of the Byway. Directional signs will lead the traveler to the site. This is a new site with potential for development as a campground.

**Purpose*

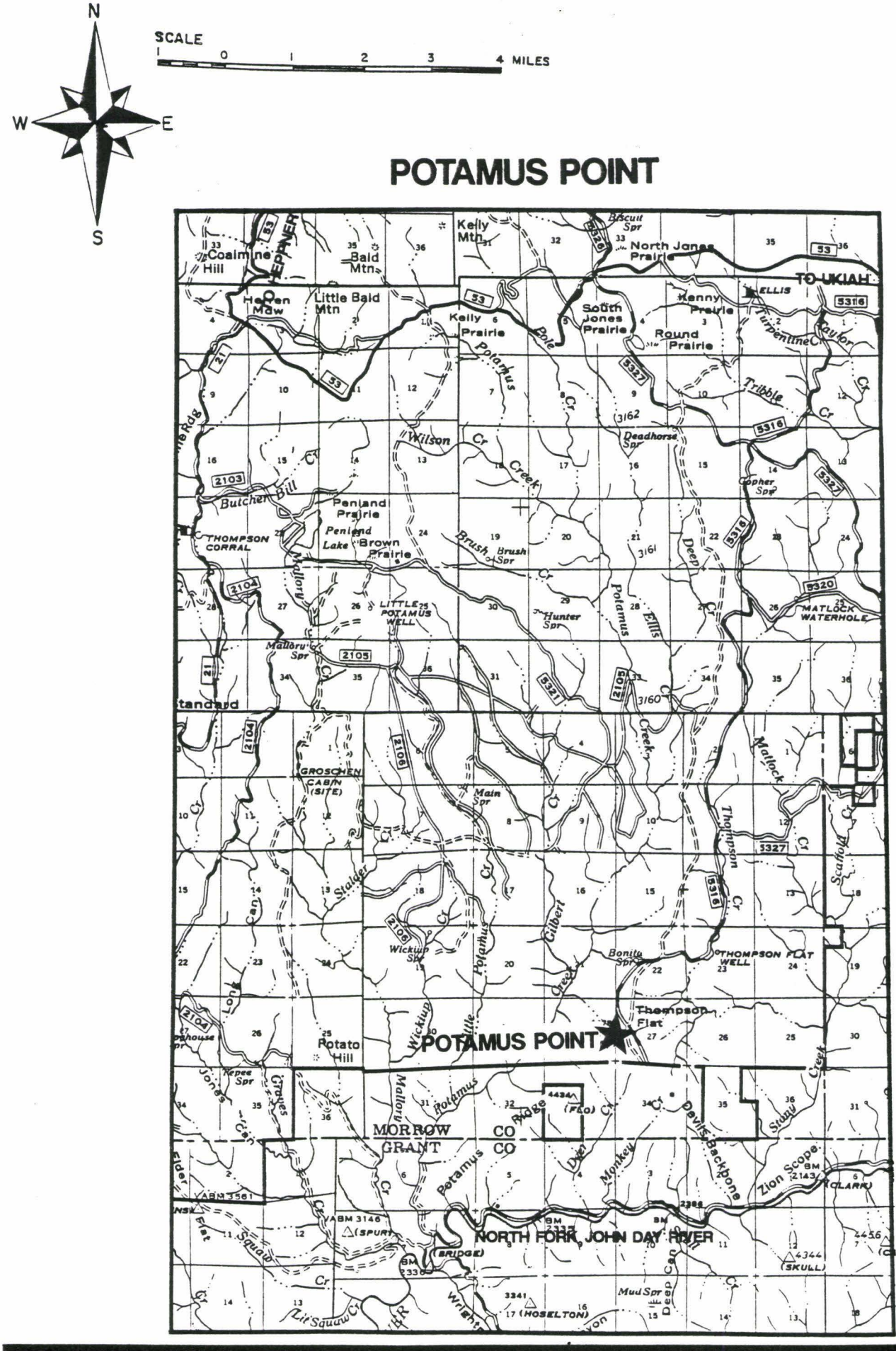
To create a feeling of awe over the natural forces required to create this rugged landscape.

**Inscription*

To be developed



POTAMUS POINT



Title: Camas Valley

**Placement*

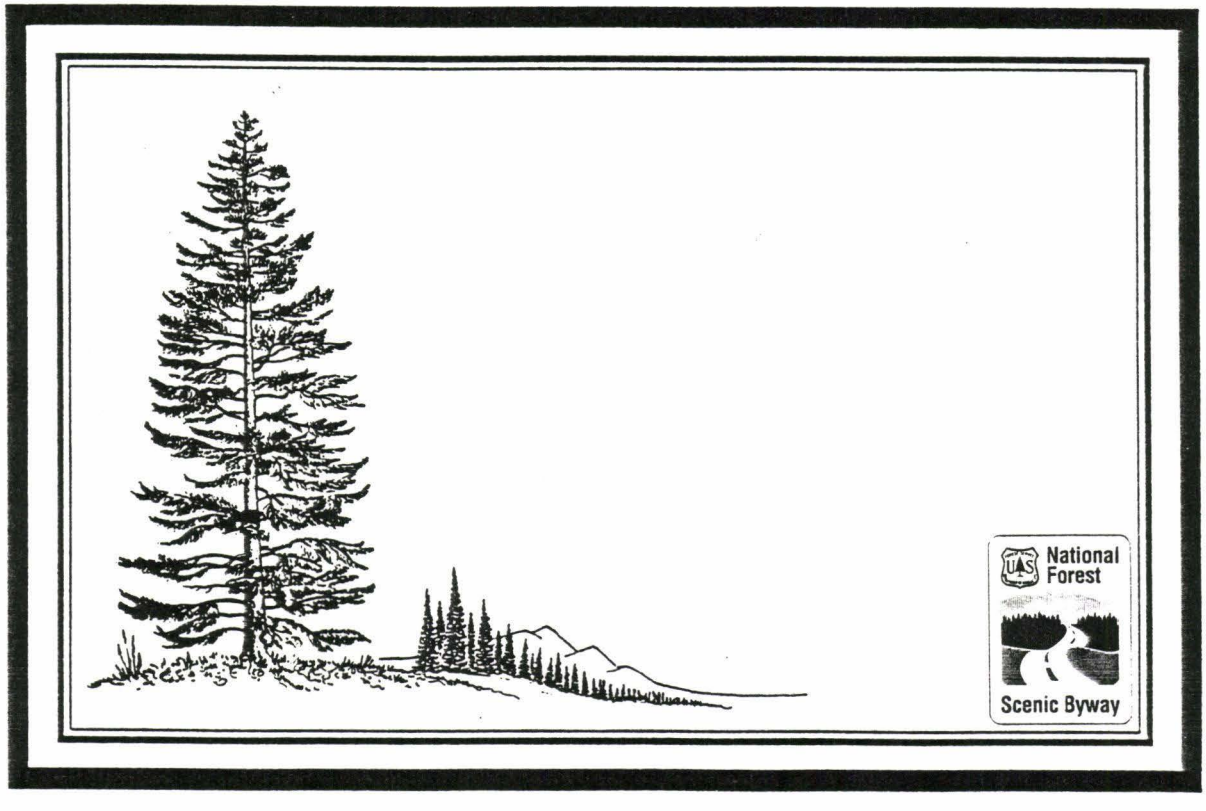
Approximately 1.5 miles west of U.S. 395. This is a proposed facility. This site will have 3 interpretive signs.

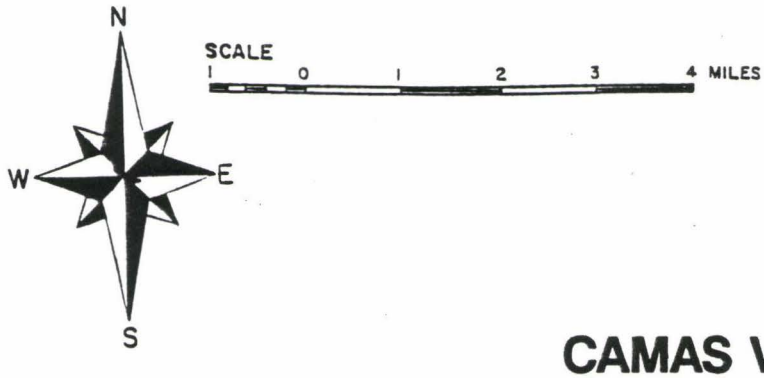
**Purpose*

To inform visitors of the early development of the Camas Valley.

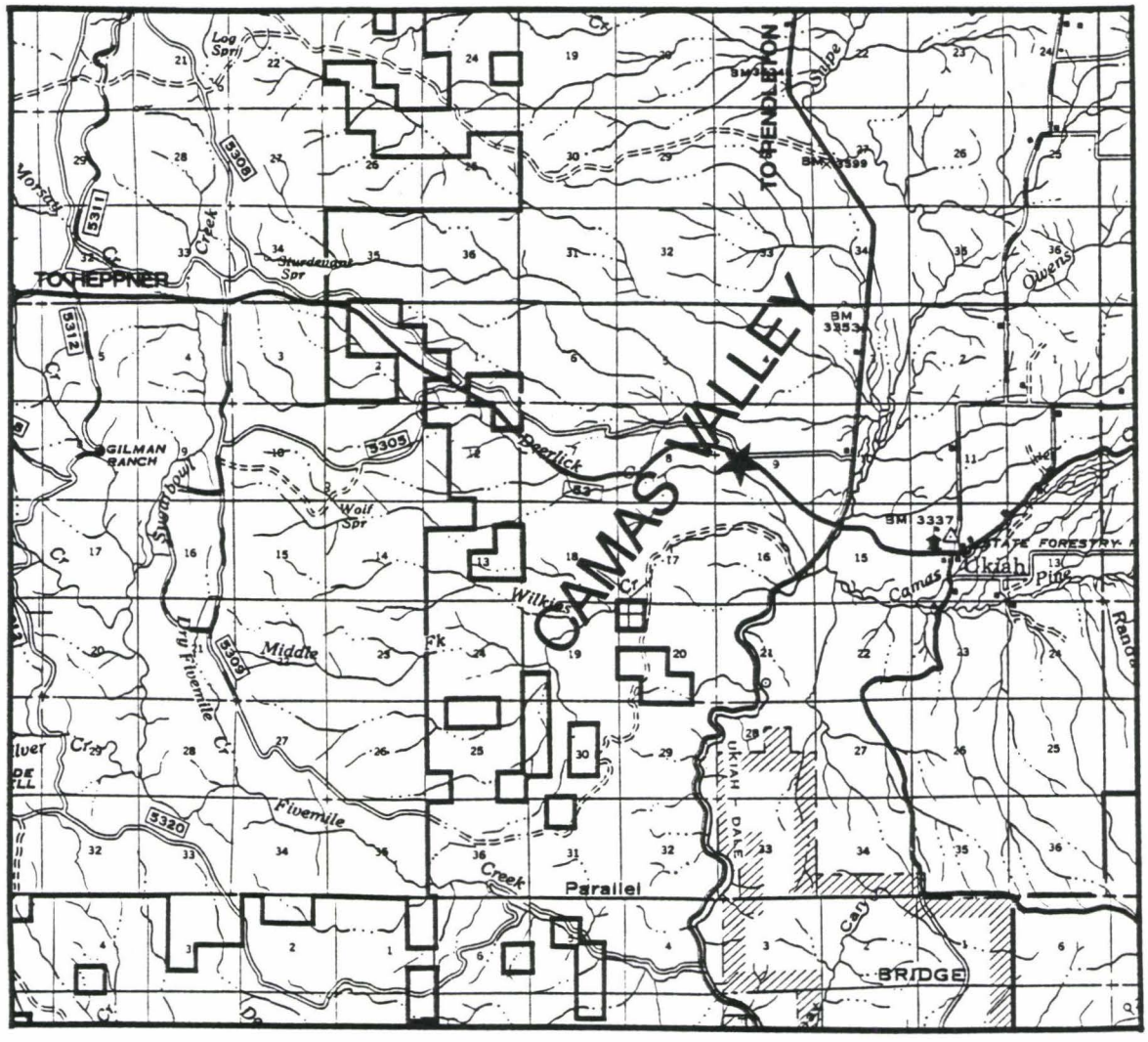
**Inscription*

The area below was once covered by a large lake. The Indians speak of a "great rumbling" that happened "many moons ago," and the lake vanished. The Indians came to the area for many years to gather wild blue camas root for food.





CAMAS VALLEY



Title: Seasons in Camas Valley

**Placement*

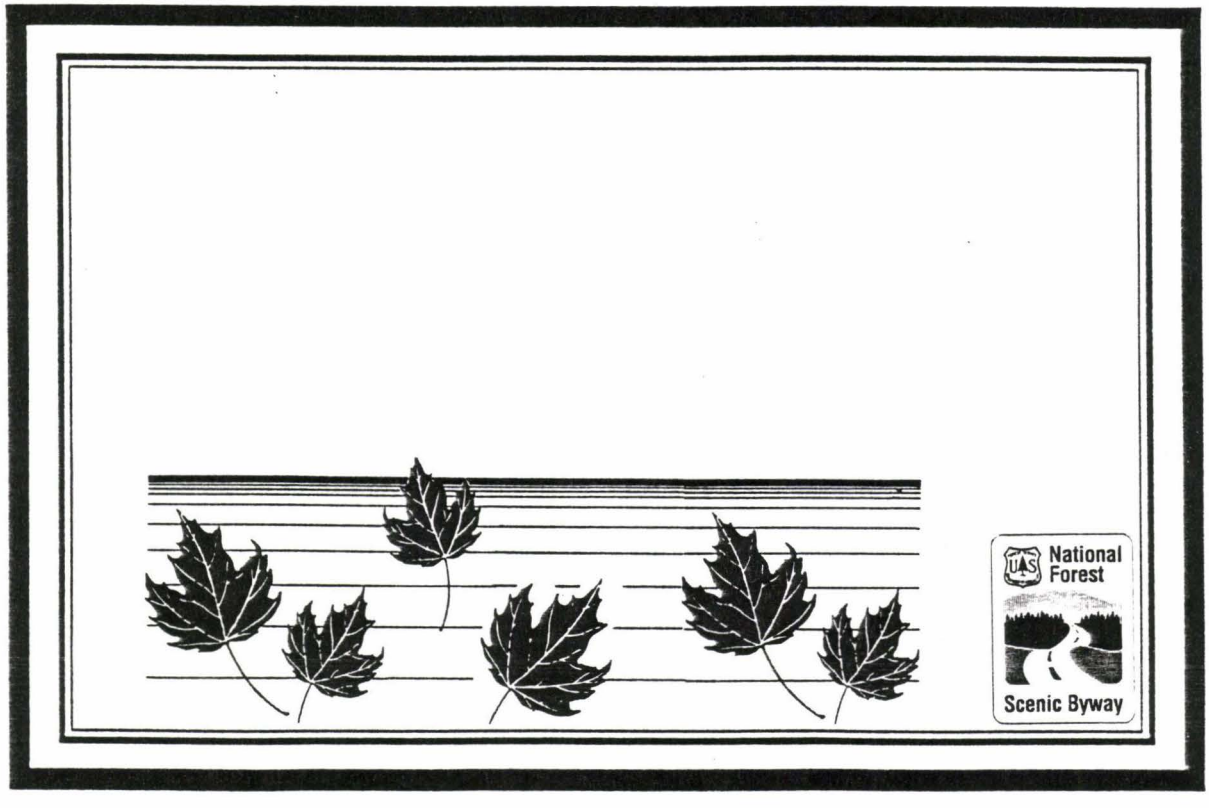
Approximately 1.5 miles west of U.S. 395. This is a proposed facility.

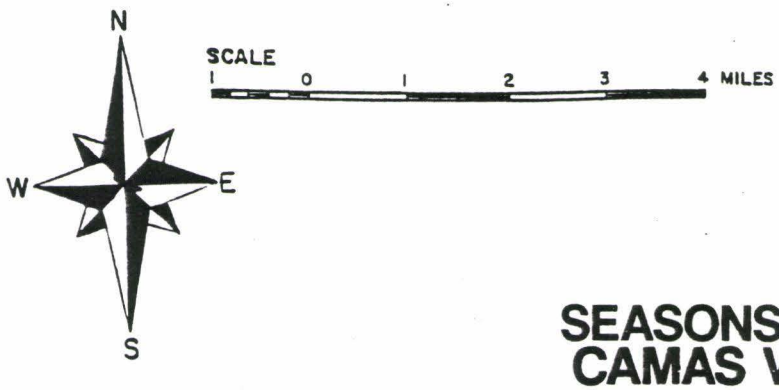
**Purpose*

To convey a feeling of excitement over the beauty of the area.

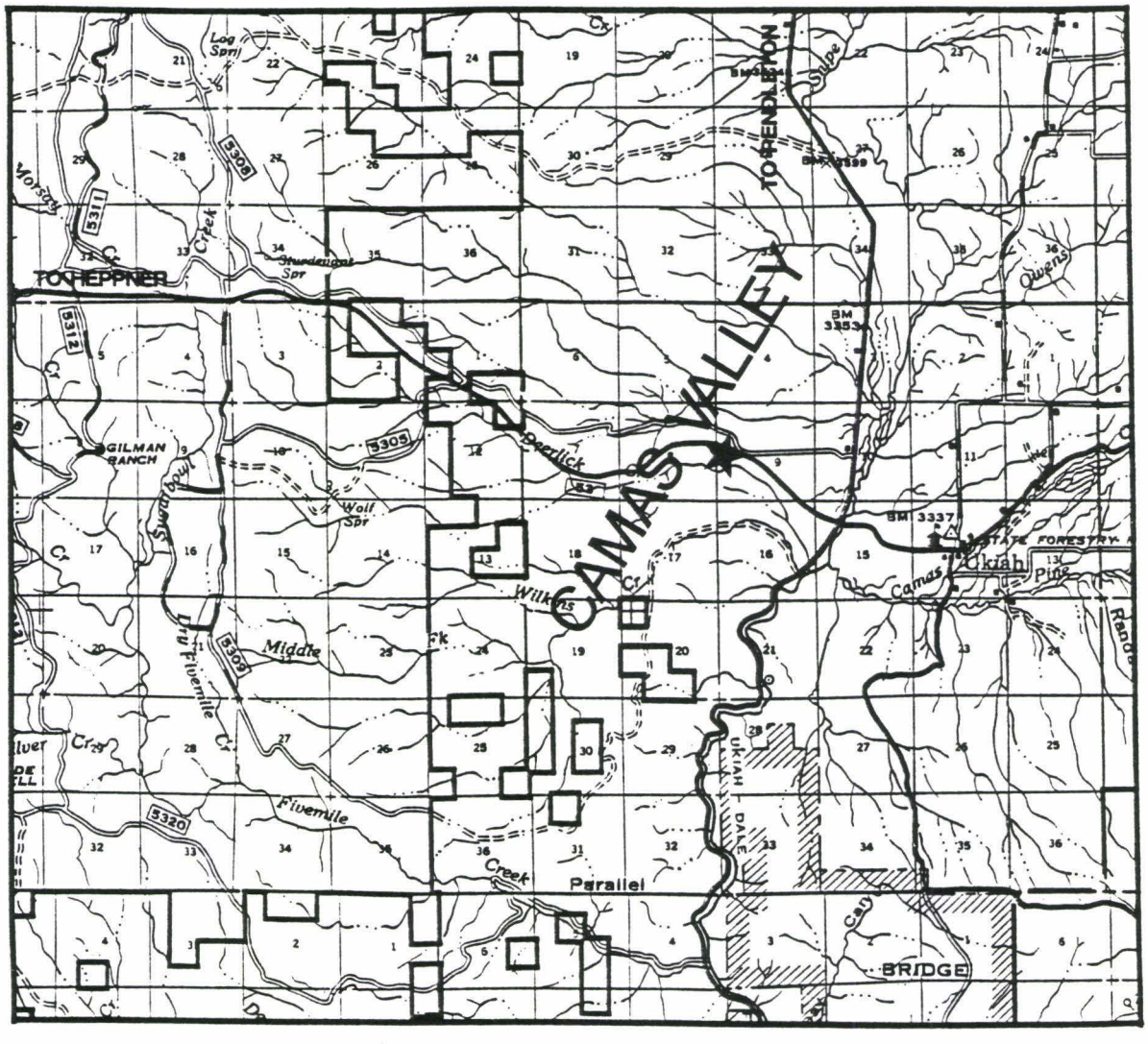
**Inscription*

Changing seasons display colorful wildflowers, roosting birds, and migrating elk. To be developed further.





SEASONS IN THE CAMAS VALLEY



Title: The Town of Ukiah

**Placement*

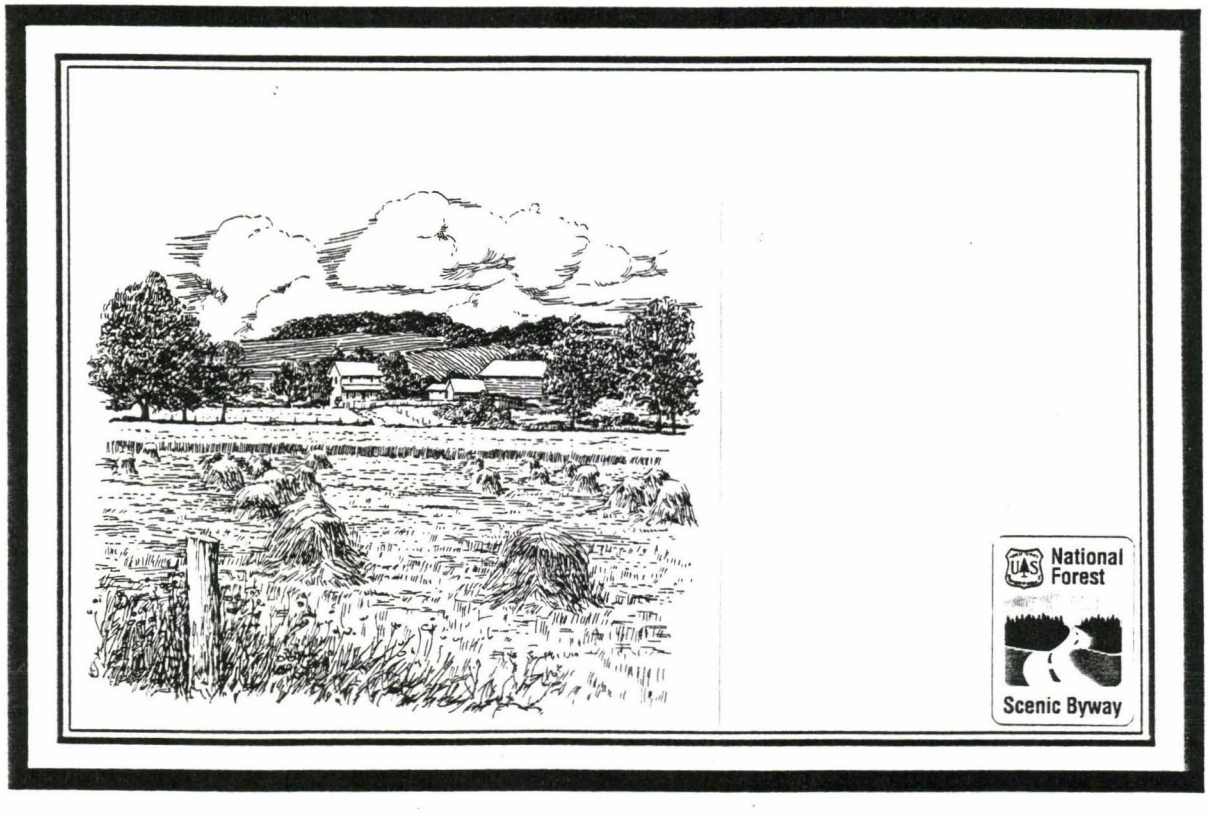
Approximately 1.5 miles west of U.S. 395. This is a proposed facility.

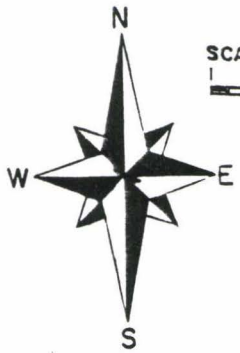
**Purpose*

To inform visitors of the early development of the Camas Valley.

**Inscription*

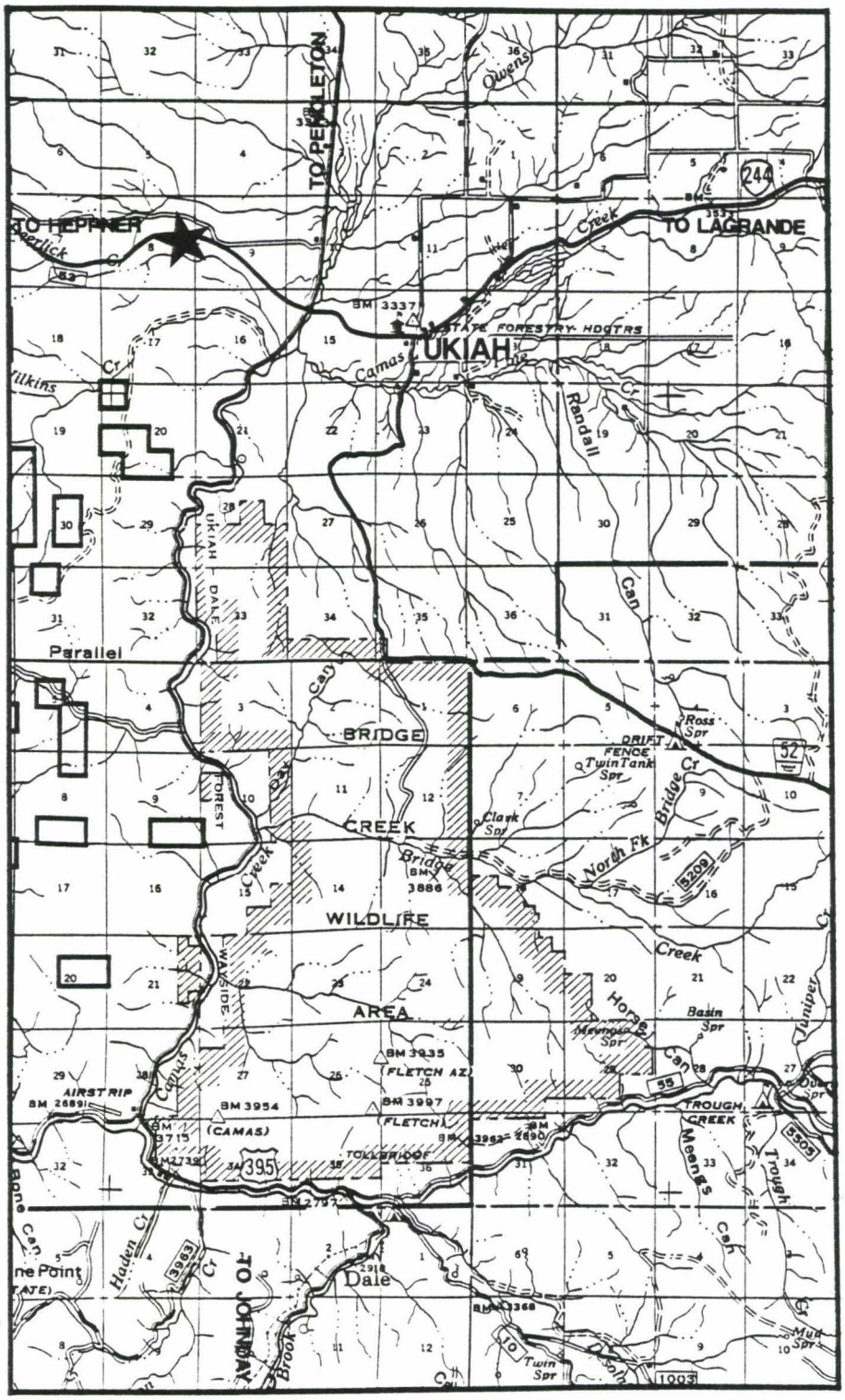
The town below was originally called Camas Prairie. The name was changed to Ukiah by E.B. Gamba, the first postmaster. Founded in 1891, Ukiah boasted churches, stores, hotels, dance halls, a telephone office, a creamery, a bakery, a livery stable, and even a blacksmith. Grazing, logging, and mining were the primary industries.





SCALE
0 1 2 3 4 MILES

TOWN OF UKIAH



Title: Rocky Mountain Elk - Bridge Creek Wildlife Area

**Placement*

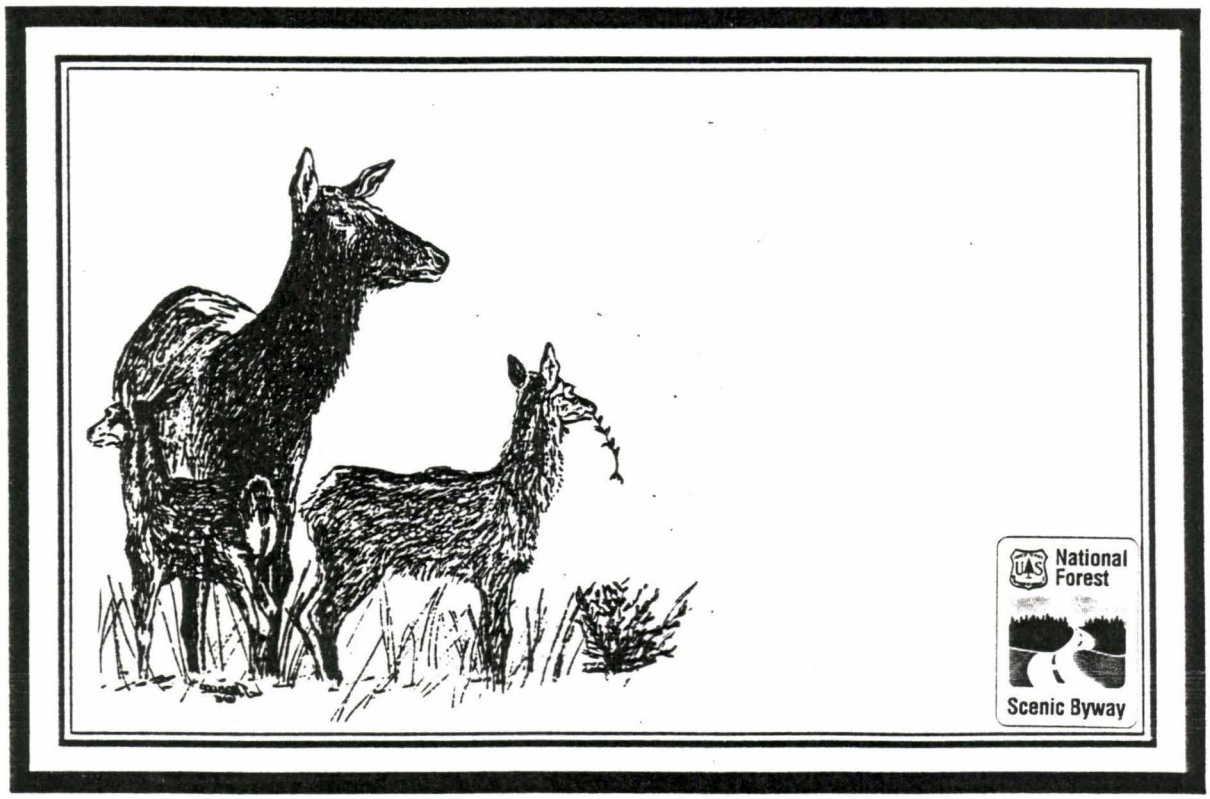
Bridgecreek Wildlife Area Overlook. This site includes a short hiking trail to an overlook of the Bridge Creek area.

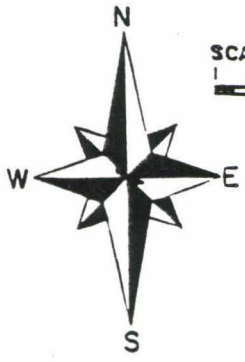
**Purpose*

To create an understanding of the complexities of big game management and the interrelationships with other resource uses.

**Inscription*

The Bridge Creek Wildlife Area is a 15,000 acre area administered by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. In conjunction with adjacent National Forest land, it serves as critical winter range for one of the largest wintering populations of Rocky Mountain elk in the Blue Mountains (1,200-1,400 animals). Management of the area is essential to the continued welfare of the elk and to the prevention of elk damage on private lands.





SCALE
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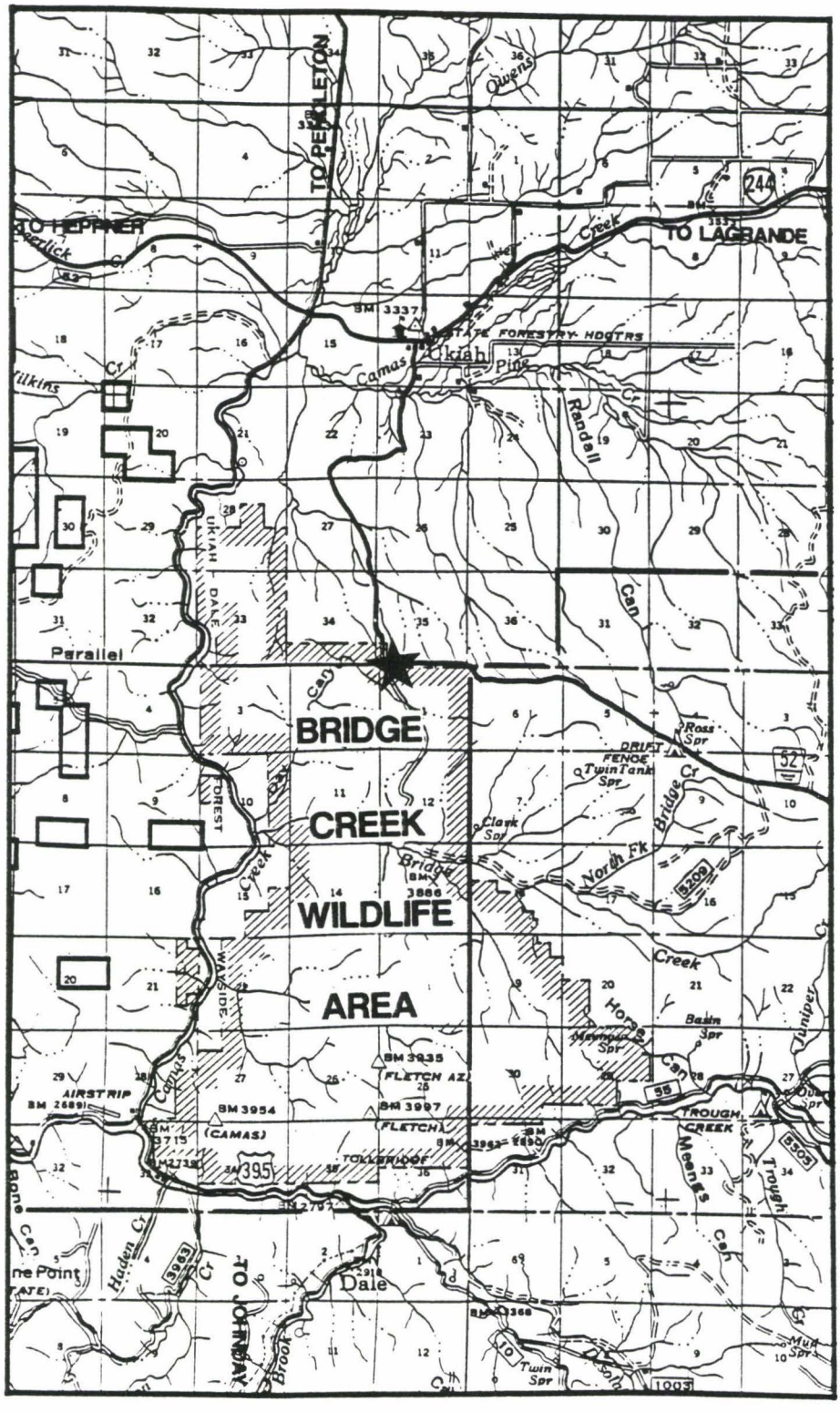
BRIDGE CREEK WILDLIFE AREA



Title: Blue Mountains

**Placement*

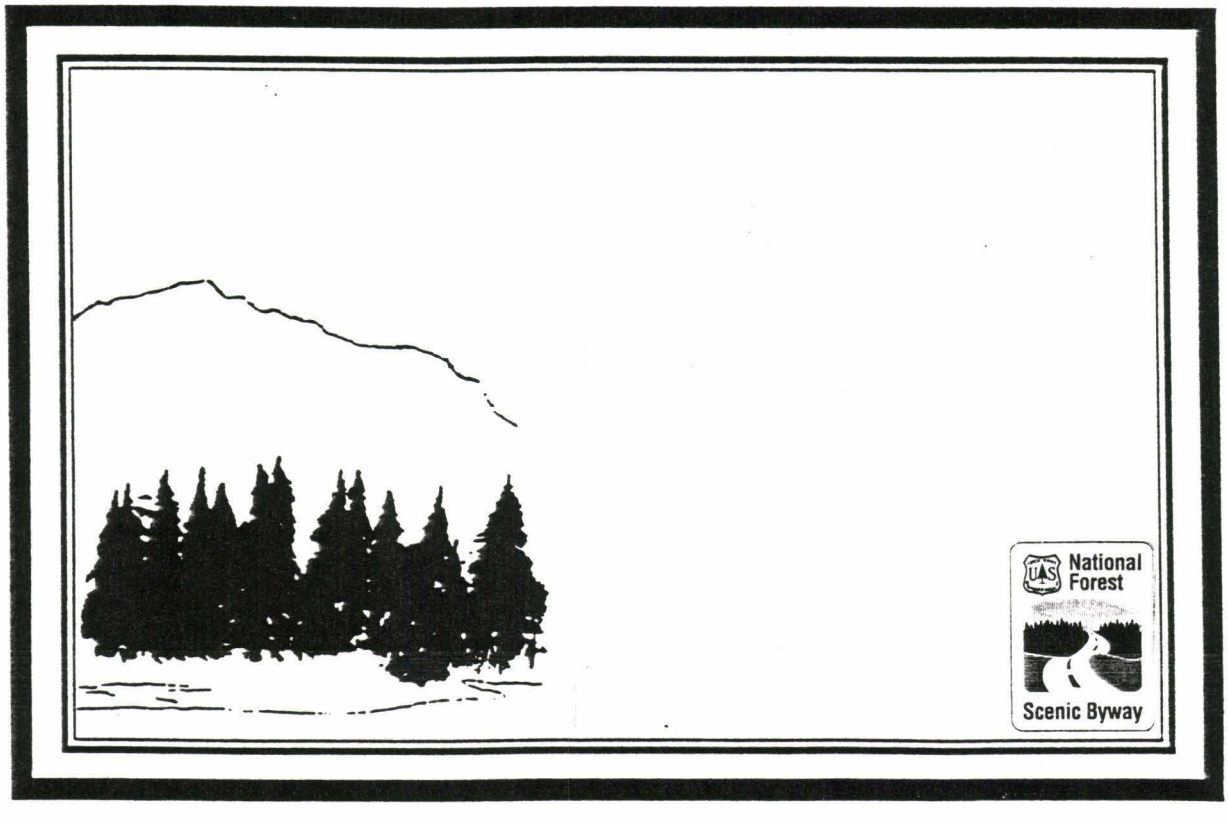
Turnout along Forest Service Road 52 near Pearson Guard Station

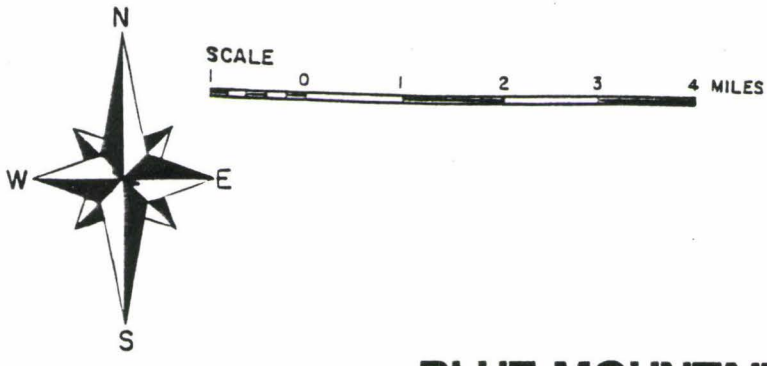
**Purpose*

To create an awareness of the massive diversity of the Blue Mountains and to develop an understanding of man's interaction with nature through forest management practices.

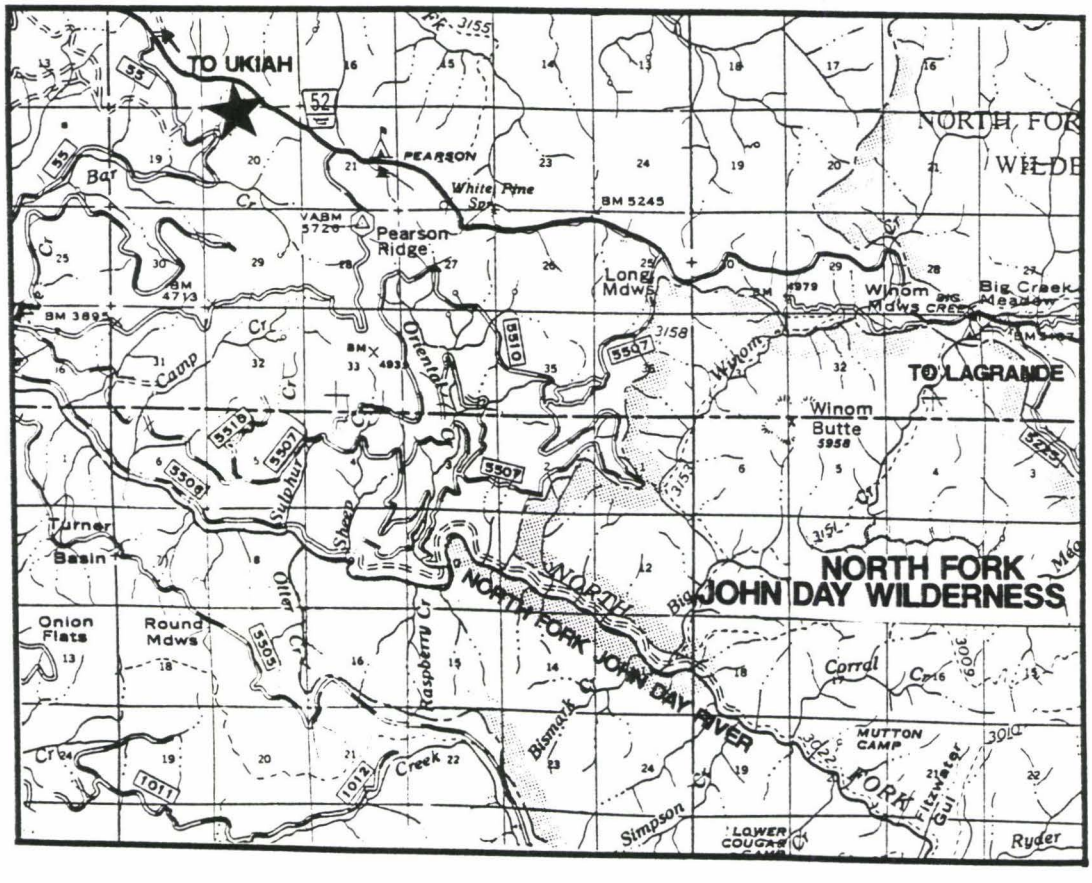
**Inscription*

To be determined. The display will point out various geographic features such as the North Fork John Day River, vegetative communities, geologic formations, and processes (natural and man caused) affecting these resources.





BLUE MOUNTAINS OVERLOOK



Brochures and Audio Tapes

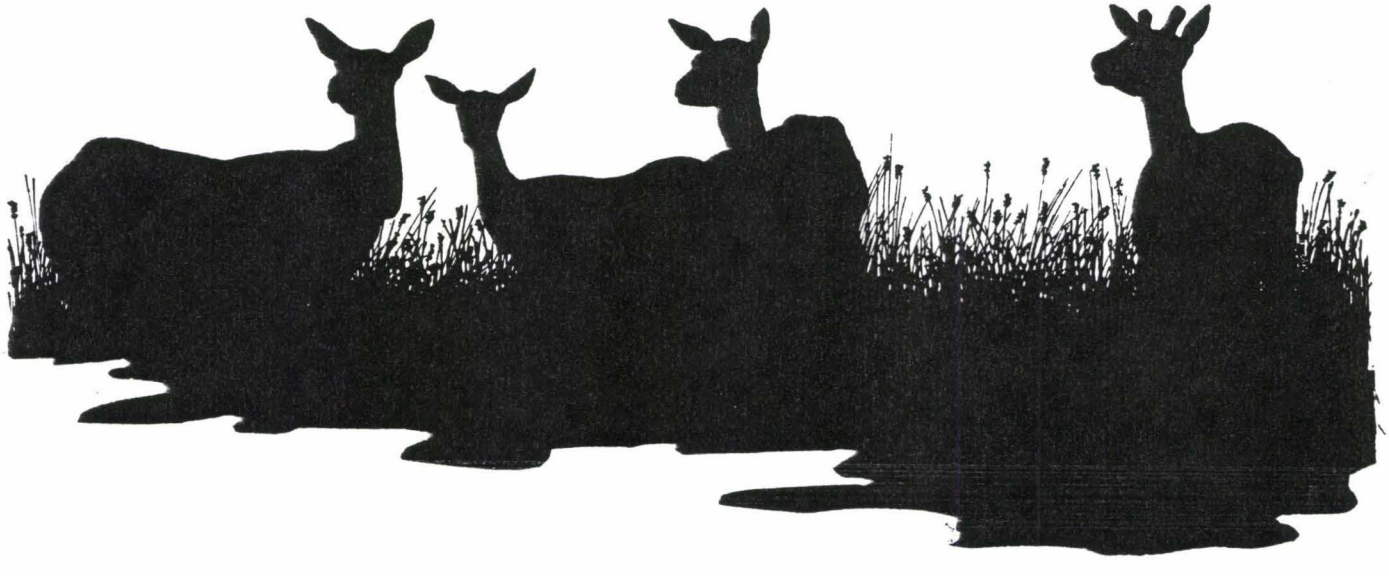
Brochures provide an effective means of providing information or conveying interpretive messages to visitors on the Byway. They can be used to highlight points of interest, show the locations of services, and provide information about recreation opportunities. In self-guided tours, they can be used to compliment signs along the Byway. Brochures will provide more detailed information than signs.

Four topics have been identified for brochures. It should be noted that countless other opportunities exist and can be added in the future.

1. General overview of the Blue Mountain Scenic Byway. Purpose is to provide brief descriptions of various points of interest along the Byway. It can be used with other brochures located in various offices and information centers. It is also appropriate to use as a mailer when requested.

2. Self-guided tour. The traveler can use this brochure to learn more about the historic and natural resources along the Byway. Interpretive items in the brochure will be correlated to markers on the ground so the traveler can act as his own guide.

An audio tape using the same or similar information can also be developed for use by the Byway traveler. Users will "hear" information as they travel along the route. This method is a more friendly way to provide information and will make it possible to interpret items "on the move." It will become an important tool where space is inadequate for traveler turn-outs. The audio tape will be referenced with ground markers.



Possible items to include in brochures and audio tapes:

Town Sites:

Cecil
Morgan
Ione
Lexington
Heppner
Ukiah
Granite

Historical Events and Uses:

Lewis and Clark Journey
Heppner Flood
Grazing
Mining
St. Partick's Day/Irish Influence
Railroad Development
Lumbering

Natural Resources:

Geology
Wilderness
Vegetation
Wildlife
Water
Fire

Historical Sites:

Oregon Trail
Morrow County Courthouse
Morrow County Museum
Fremont Powerhouse
Pearson Guard Station
Ellis Guard Station

In certain instances, entire brochures might address a single item, such as Geology of the Blue Mountains or the Lewis and Clark Journey. The longer audio tape could cover broader topic, such as Natural Resources or Historical Events and Uses.

3. Nature Trail - Cutsforth Park. A self-guided nature trail will be developed in the vicinity of Morrow County's Cutsforth Park. Interpretive emphasis will focus on natural resources such as vegetation, forest insects and disease, snags, down logs, the role of fire, geology, water, and others. Appropriate signing will key the brochure to the nature trail.

4. Rocky Mountain Elk. A brochure detailing Rocky Mountain Elk in the Blue Mountains is already in the initial phase of planning through the Blue Mountain Elk Initiative. When complete, this brochure should be made available at the Bridge Creek Wildlife Area Overlook.

Support Facilities

Existing

**Lodging*

Lodging along the byway can be found at Ione, Heppner, and Ukiah. Both Ione and Heppner have Bed & Breakfast lodging in old Victorian style houses.

**Fuel*

Motor fuel can be purchased at Ione, Lexington, Heppner, Ukiah and Granite.

**Food*

Ione, Lexington, Heppner, Ukiah and Granite offer food services at local restaurants or pubs.

**Camping*

The Northwestern RV park, located in Heppner, offers 15 sites with full hook-ups and cable television to RV's along the byway. Cutsforth County Park, 16 miles southeast of Heppner, offers 15 trailer pads with full hook-ups and 7 trailer/tent sites without hook-ups but with available water. There is a picnic area for large and small groups, a children's playground, restroom facilities with showers, neighboring day hike trails, and both a pond and stream for fishing.

Penland Lake, located 27 miles southeast of Heppner, provides picnic and restroom facilities. Camping is limited to 5 tent sites, though overnight RV camping occurs in the parking area. The lake provides fishing, swimming and boating opportunities. Only electric motors are allowed on the lake.

North Fork John Day Campground is popular among fishers and hunters alike. There are 7 tent/trailer sites and 2 tent sites. Drinking water and garbage facilities are not provided. Other camping opportunities include Divide Wells, Drift Fence, Big Creek, and Olive Lake Campgrounds.

Potential

**Kelly Prairie Campsite*

This area is very popular for the dispersed camper. However, no facilities exist and users often drive through the prairie to locate campsites. This proposal will develop a dispersed campground with interpretive signs on such subjects as meadow ecology, timber harvest practices, and insect impacts on tree stands.

**Potamus Point Campsite*

This area can be developed in conjunction with the Potamus Point Wayside. Further analysis will be needed prior to development of the facility.

Entrances

Main Portals

The main entrance on each end of the Byway will contain general information regarding the Byway. Entrances will include displays similar to those used as wayside exhibits. A map of the Byway will be displayed showing where facilities are located. The type of signs found along the route also need to be displayed.

Title: Blue Mountain Scenic Byway

**Placement*
East and West Portals

**Purpose*
To provide a general orientation to travelers of the Byway.

**Inscription*
The Blue Mountain Scenic Byway, designated in 1989 under the National Forest Scenic Byway Program, allows east-west travelers an alternate route between Arlington, Oregon (near the Columbia River) and Baker City, Oregon. This scenic byway covers 130 miles of paved, two lane road across Morrow and Umatilla Counties in northeast Oregon. A portion of the Byway also crosses the Umatilla National Forest.

The Blue Mountain Scenic Byway offers a variety of scenery along with historical sites and natural resources. Numerous recreational opportunities are also present along the route.

We hope you will enjoy the trip along the Blue Mountain Scenic Byway. Information about the Byway can be obtained at various places along the route including businesses in the local towns as well as the Heppner and North Fork John Day Ranger Stations.

You may also write or call for more information at the following locations:

Umatilla National Forest
2517 S.W. Hailey Ave.
Pendleton, OR 97801
(503) 276-3811

Morrow County Tourism
P.O. Box 1232
Heppner, OR 97836
(503) 676-5349 (evenings)

North Fork John Day Ranger District
P.O. Box 158
Ukiah, OR 97880
(503) 427-3231

Heppner Ranger District
P.O. Box 7
Heppner, OR 97836
(503) 676-9187

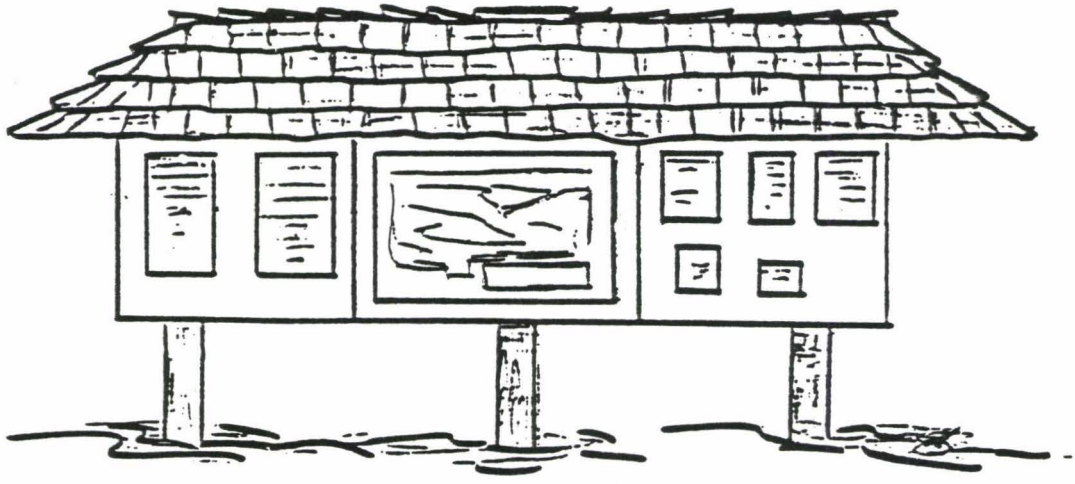
Information Centers

Two information centers are located along the Byway. These are used for a variety of information purposes. Information concerning the Byway can be found at these sites as well.

**Route Markers and Other Signs*

There are several "side" entrances to the Byway. These entrances will be clearly marked with directional signs to help travelers find their way.

Confidence markers will be located along the route to assist travelers along the Byway.



IMPLEMENTATION, MARKETING AND EVALUATION

The Blue Mountain Scenic Byway is becoming widely known throughout the Northwest. There has also been a smattering of interest from other regions of the country. It has been described in several tour guides and has received wide publicity in local, regional and national news markets.

Directional signs have been installed, so travelers along Interstate 84 will become increasingly more aware of the Byway. Development of the interpretive products proposed in this plan should begin immediately. This prompt action will ensure travelers receive the service and experience described in this plan. Word-of-mouth marketing will also improve as interpretive products are developed.

Without good interpretive sites and products, the economic gain expected by small communities located on the Byway will rapidly disappear. The Byway Program is an important ingredient in the economic future of these communities. Partnership opportunities, commitment, and support are at extremely high levels.

Marketing will target the audiences identified in the Visitor Analysis section. Several vehicles are available to accomplish this task including Automobile Association of America publications, tour guides, existing publications, regional news media, etc. In addition, descriptions in current references should be updated to include the theme ideas presented in this plan. The marketing effort has already begun; it should continue.

Several projects on National Forest lands should be programed into the Regional capital investment program. Interpretive associations will be invaluable in developing and producing publications. Table 1 displays cost estimates to guide implementation efforts.

Evaluation of the interpretive effort is an important part of this plan. Direct feedback will be the primary method of data collection. A simple questionnaire will be developed. It will be used in combination with other publications and contacts. The collected data will reveal how well interpretive services are meeting visitor needs.

TABLE 1. COST ESTIMATES

Wayside Exhibits:

Oregon Trail: $10,000
Heppner Flood: 2,000
Potamus Point: 20,000
Camas Prairie: 15,000
Rocky Mountain Elk: 10,000
Blue Mountains: 10,000

Brochures and Audio Tape:

General: $2,000
Self Guided Brochure: 2,000
Self Guided Audio Tape: 5,000
Interpretive Trail: 2,000

Interpretive Trail: $25,000

All facilities will be designed to accommodate the needs of disabled persons.

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REFERENCES

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